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That out's thy good alone  
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And read it for mine own  
November 29<sup>th</sup> 1886

(Heart)  
L F K

Take it to the  
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*Presented  
to  
Frederick*

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**THE HEART.**

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May 12

For. Sec.

**THE HEART**  
**DELINEATED**  
**IN ITS STATE BY NATURE,**  
**AND AS**  
**RENEWED BY GRACE.**

**BY**  
**A PRESBYTER**  
**OF THE PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH.**

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**NEW-YORK:**  
**SWORDS, STANFORD, AND CO.**  
**No. 152 Broadway.**

**1834.**



### ERRATA.

Page 67, line fifth from bottom, for "proscribes," read pre-scribes.

118, line fifth from bottom, for "affections," read affection.

118, line fourth from bottom, for "lest," read that.

136, line sixth from top, after the word *is*, insert *it*.

264, line sixth from bottom, after the word *moral*, insert *and*.

## PREFACE.

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IN the following pages it is intended to illustrate *the human heart*. By this, I mean something widely different from that fleshly organ, which performs the most important and the most vital functions in the body of man; which has been so often laid bare by the knife of the anatomist, and technically described by the physiologist. I mean THE SEAT AND SPRING OF THE AFFECTIONS; THE MORAL AND SPIRITUAL PART OF MAN; IN DISTINCTION FROM THE INTELLECTUAL OR THINKING PART OF THE SOUL, AND SEPARATED BY A STILL BROADER AND DEEPER LINE OF DEMARCATION FROM THE MATERIAL BODY. That man *has* A HEART, in this sense of the term, even wild and sceptical theorists allow, and the world at large *feel*. The distinct nature of this spiritual organ is clearly recognised in

many popular phrases daily used. What more common than the remark, that an individual "*has much mind, but little heart?*" and again, "*a weak mind, but a good heart?*" To metaphysicians and physiologists, I leave all subtle disquisitions on the subject. While some lose themselves amidst abstract theories concerning the laws and properties of mind and spirit, and while others busy themselves in reading the qualities of *the heart*, in the external developments of *the head*, in tracing all moral sensations and acts to the influence of *physical temperament, consequent on corporeal organization*, I would fain present some plain truths in a plain way, to those who *have minds to reflect, and hearts to feel*; and who, leaving *the philosophy* of thought and feeling to others, are principally anxious *to think and feel aright*. To such I shall speak of the heart in a popular yet scriptural manner: and I mistake, if a familiar scriptural analysis and consideration of its several qualities will not do more towards the rectification of its many disorders, than any speculations of "*philosophy falsely so called*."

The *geographer*, who would convey a just idea of any particular country, gives its outlines and prominent features, exhibits its state at different seasons, notes its inhabitants, its culture, and its productions. The *astronomer*, who would describe a planet, follows it through its wonted course, and depicts it in all its phases. The *demonstrator in anatomy*, shows the joints, bones, nerves, and muscles of the animal man, both separately and in their mutual connexion and dependence. The *accomplished physician*, in descanting upon any viscus or organ, exhibits it in its healthful state, and in its derangement; in the regular discharge of its appropriate functions, and in its morbid action. *My object* is to give a graphic description, a faithful chart, of the spiritual region within; to show the different phases of a spiritual but too erratic planet; its darker and its brighter aspects, as it recedes from or approximates towards the sun and centre of light and life; to lay open and exhibit the framework and texture of the inner man, so "fearfully and wonderfully made;" to place before the reader the *moral heart* in its

soundness and its unsoundness ; as it now, with perfect regularity, sends the warm current of life and health through the system, or again as it labours under its occasional and fearful maladies.

The several states or conditions under which the heart will be presented, are such as have been “ noted in the Scripture of truth.” These, it is trusted, will give a clear view of the subject, and, at the same time, be connected with sacred associations in the minds of the pious. It is a fair presumption, that “ He who formed” the heart, who “ knoweth what is in the heart of man, and needeth not that any should tell him,” best knew what are its leading peculiarities, and by what terms they should be designated. In following, then, the divisions, and adopting the terms of Him “ who spake by the prophets,” we cannot greatly err.

Even a superficial reader of the sacred volume must be struck by one great distinction which there obtains—the distinction between THE HEART AS IT IS BY NATURE and THE HEART AS RENEWED BY DIVINE GRACE ; leading to an analogous arrange-

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**THE HEART.**

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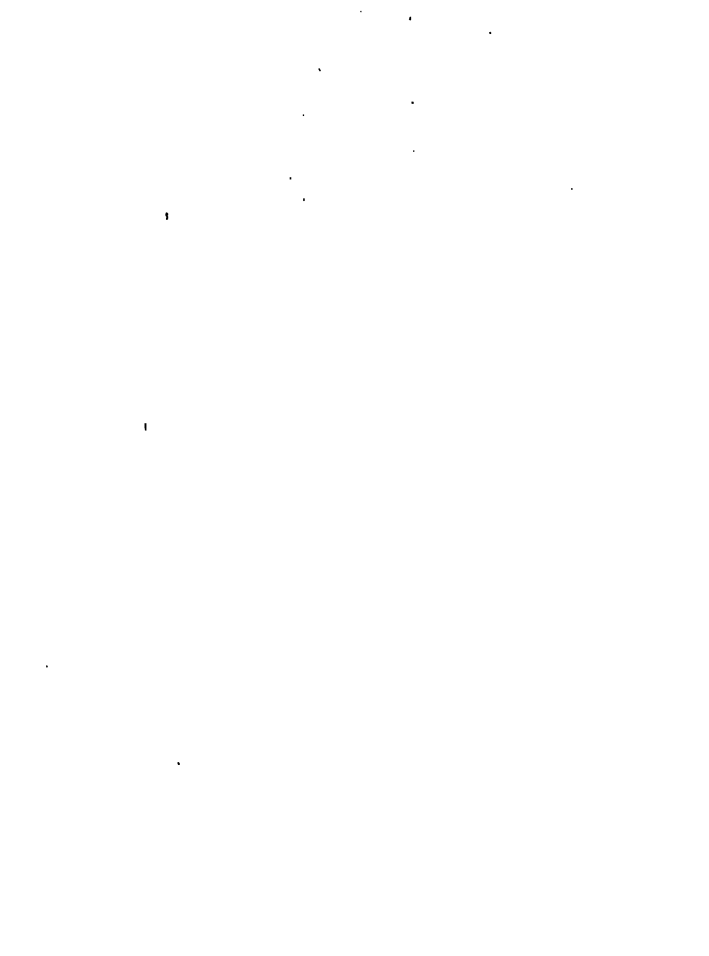
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TO  
THE MEMORY  
OF  
AN AFFECTIONATE AND MUCH-LOVED  
MOTHER,  
A LOVELY BABE,  
AND  
AN HONOURED AND LAMENTED AUNT,  
WHO,  
IN THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD,  
WERE ALL REMOVED DURING ITS PREPARATION  
FOR THE PRESS,  
THIS LITTLE WORK IS INSCRIBED  
BY  
THE AUTHOR.





## PREFACE.

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IN the following pages it is intended to illustrate *the human heart*. By this, I mean something widely different from that fleshly organ, which performs the most important and the most vital functions in the body of man; which has been so often laid bare by the knife of the anatomist, and technically described by the physiologist. I mean THE SEAT AND SPRING OF THE AFFECTIONS; THE MORAL AND SPIRITUAL PART OF MAN; IN DISTINCTION FROM THE INTELLECTUAL OR THINKING PART OF THE SOUL, AND SEPARATED BY A STILL BROADER AND DEEPER LINE OF DEMARCATION FROM THE MATERIAL BODY. That man *has* A HEART, in this sense of the term, even wild and sceptical theorists allow, and the world at large *feel*. The distinct nature of this spiritual organ is clearly recognised in

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# **PART FIRST.**

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## **THE HEART IN ITS STATE BY NATURE.**





## CHAPTER I.

---

### ON THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE HEART.

---

“ Who can know it ? ”

“ Ye know not what spirit ye are of.”

“ Examine yourselves.”

**CAN** the heart be known by its possessor ? by him whose spiritual being, whose identity and accountability it forms ? In other words, can it be *known by itself* ? This is an important question. The interrogative exclamation of the prophet, prefixed to this chapter, seems to assert the negative in the strongest possible manner. The declaration of our Lord to his zealous but vindictive disciples, shows that many *do not* know their own hearts, nor the motives under which they speak and act. The exhortation of the apostle to a careful examination of self, proceeds upon the same presumption : and facts daily show, that a vast majority of mankind know as little of their own heart, as though it belonged not to them ; as little as they do of the unexplored and most re-

16 ON THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE HEART.

mote regions of the earth, the mere names and positions of which they have only heard. We often hear the expression, that such or such men "*have no heart—no soul*;" and an ingenious and pious writer,\* improving upon the hint, and drawing his inferences from the ordinary conduct of the mass of men, has presented us with "*a world without souls*." These men, to whom *the very possession of a heart* is popularly denied, feel indeed some of its more common natural affections; they are moved at times by its fiercer passions; and they habitually obey its perverted tendencies. Yet they do all this as it were *mechanically*, just as the brute follows his instinct; never asking themselves whence the prompting comes—whether it be right or wrong; or what is the state of that exhaustless fund of thought, and spring of feeling and of action from which they daily draw, and which sends its strong current through all the channels of the life. They "care for none of these things"—they investigate them not—"these things they willingly are ignorant of"—as ignorant as they are of the deepest, the most inscrutable mysteries of God. Automaton-like, they move and act, but do not *think*; *moving and acting from impulse*, not from *principle*. Such men (and alas they are but too numerous!) it is evident cannot and will not know their own hearts,

\* Rev. J. W. Cunningham.

until their true state shall be revealed to them in the searching light, and amidst the full developments of *that day*, when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed.

“Know thyself,” was one of the admired dicta of ancient wisdom. This was no more than an exhortation to study and know *the heart*, for the heart constitutes the moral man. Yet Heathen wisdom, while it gave the precept, could give neither counsel nor aid for its fulfilment. This was to be reserved for *Revelation*. In its fulness and perfection indeed, this knowledge is *not to be obtained on earth*; for the most exalted saint, through the imperfection of his discernment, and the deceitfulness of nature, will live and die in partial ignorance of self. After his best endeavours to know himself aright, he will have reason to be dissatisfied with the result, and to cry out with the Psalmist, “Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

To all who are anxious not to remain strangers to themselves, and to the busy little world of thought and feeling within them, we would earnestly recommend the careful and frequent perusal of MASON'S ADMIRABLE TREATISE ON SELF-KNOWLEDGE—a work deservedly dear to the religious public, and one which it is believed has produced as much of spiritual benefit as any

other human production that has gone forth to the world. But, infinitely above this and all other human aids is God's own BOOK. Let *that* be studied in an humble and believing spirit, and we shall soon ascertain what our hearts are by nature, and what they may and must be made, through grace, if we would escape condemnation. There, and there alone, we can learn the holiness of God—the nature, offensiveness, “exceeding sinfulness” of sin. There only we can learn *what constitutes sin*; how it lurks unsuspected under many a fair aspect, and many a lauded action. Above all, there we learn to trace it *in its connexion with ourselves*—to see and to feel, not only that *all* men are sinners, but that “*we* have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” From general, careless admissions and assertions, we come to private and personal application—to home appeals—to humbling communings with our own hearts—to the tear of penitence—to the heart-prompted confession—to the prayer of faith and intensity. The mirror, not of falsehood and flattery, but of reality and truth, is held up before us. We behold our image, clearly and faithfully reflected. Struck with our moral and spiritual deformity, pride and vanity being broken and dissipated as in a moment, we are constrained to say—“God be merciful to me a sinner!” “Lord Jesus, save me or I perish!”

And not less necessary are these Scriptures of

truth to the confirmation of the *believer*, than to the conversion of the sinner. Notwithstanding his faith, even *he* is in danger of "forgetting what manner of man he is," and ought to be. They who "knew not what spirit they were of," were *disciples* of our blessed Lord, in *personal attendance* upon his ministry. It was one of the most zealous of their number who merited and received the cutting rebuke—"Get thee behind me, Satan; for thou art an offence to me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." So little did this same disciple know himself and his own weakness, that he averred to his Master, with all confidence, "Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended"—"Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee." The sequel of this presumptuous confidence is known, and should be treasured up in memory by all Christian disciples as a solemn warning to themselves. Well indeed did the Psalmist express himself, when he exclaimed in prayer, "Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from *secret* faults. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me." Now it is from *his Bible* that the Christian will best learn "to understand his errors." By it, "his secret sins will be set in the light of his countenance," and we be unto him, if neglecting that "word of God," which "is quick, and powerful,

a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart," he suffers them to be for a time concealed from himself. They will not be concealed for ever. Too large to be longer covered with the mantle of deceit, and too powerful for restraint, bursting all the bonds of prudence and of decency, they will glare in the broad light of day, to his own shame and confusion of face, and to the astonishment and contempt of the world; and, his own spirit being crushed and broken by the too late perception of their magnitude and power, and the finger of scorn pointed at him on every side, these *secret offences* will rapidly pass into those "*presumptuous sins*" which defy God, and cry from the earth for his terrible retribution.

But, that the Scriptures may thus enlighten our understandings, and give us sober and humbling views of *self*, they must be consulted with earnest supplications for the aids of God's Holy Spirit. Without this, the Bible may be to us "a sealed book, and a dead letter." The lively oracles of God "will give no response to those who do but draw near," and stand, and look upon them, but are too proud, or too negligent, to ask "an answer of peace." "The vail" may be upon our hearts as it was upon the hearts of the Jews, when Moses and the Prophets are read to us; yea, when the Evangelists and Apostles, and Christ himself, address us from these heavenly pages. To the Holy Spirit alone it appertains to "convince the

world of sin, of righteousness, and of a judgment to come." He only "can take of the things of God and show them unto us." With the Psalmist then let each of us pray—"Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me. Give me the comfort of thy help, and stablish me with thy free spirit." "Send out thy light and thy truth, and let them guide me and lead me to thy holy hill."

We have now seen it to be most difficult to know our own heart. Some never attempt the acquisition of this knowledge; and even the most pious seekers attain it but measurably. A prominent cause of this difficulty and failure will be pointed out and discussed in the following chapter,



## CHAPTER II.

### THE DECEITFUL HEART

"The heart is deceitful above all things."

"Let no man deceive himself."

"Lest any be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin."

"Cursed be the deceiver, which hath in his flock a male, and voweth and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing."

**PERHAPS** no trait of human character elicits more general reprobation than deceit. The candid, the ingenuous, the single-hearted, turn in disgust from the man "whose words are softer than oil, while there is war in his heart;" who speaks "with flattering lips and a double heart." And even this man, with all his guile, either ignorant of his true character, or anxious to conceal it from the world, is loud in his denunciations of his own characteristic vice, and in his professions of honest uncompromising sincerity. And yet, while the whole human family profess to abominate *deceit*, each member of it carries within him a *deceitful* heart. "The heart," (says the Prophet Jeremiah,) is *deceitful above all things*." He speaks *generally*. "The heart," not of this man

or of another; not of *the many* or of *the few*; but the *heart generally*; as it is found in all living human possessors. Still notwithstanding this sweeping declaration, which Scripture records, and which, as we shall see, facts corroborate, we would shrink from pronouncing *deceit*, as the term is understood, an *inseparable attribute of human character*. The common ingenuousness of childhood would put to scorn such an imputation. Its open countenance, its dauntless upward-looking eye, its artless smile, all attest sincerity in the heart and speech. Should interest or fear prompt an attempt at evasion or deception, the yet unbackneyed spirit, and untutored face, betray the effort. The faltering tongue and stammering lips almost refuse to utter a *falsehood*, or, should the prompting motive be sufficiently strong to overcome this repugnance when it is uttered, indignant conscience writes its proof in the downcast quailing eye, the tell-tale blush, the culprit look of the offender. This, then, would go far to prove that although the *tendency to deceit* may be general, the *quality of deceit* is not a universal characteristic of our race, that it belongs to the exceptions among us, rather than to all; and this partial proof may be completed by remembering the universal odium in which it is held, the earnestness with which it is disavowed, and the rigour with which it is punished, when it breaks out into open artifice or fraud.

Here, then, appears a seeming paradox, that *deceitful men are comparatively rare*, and yet that *all men have within them a "deceitful heart."* This, however, is easily solved. The same term has different acceptations, and its meaning varies with its applications. Thus the *deceitfulness of the heart*, and *deceitfulness*, as applied to the peculiar disposition, to conduct, or to character, are essentially distinct. The one is of *generic*, the other of *specific* application. It would be deemed an insult to tell a man of mere ordinary worldly morality, that he was *deceitful*: but the holiest saint that lives would not demur to the charge, that his heart is *deceitful*, yea, and "*deceitful above all things.*" In the one case, the charge alleges *peculiar moral guilt*; in the other, we only affirm an individual share in the *universal frailty of poor fallen humanity*. It is the *vice of some men* to be deceitful; it is the *misfortune of all* who come into the world to be born with *deceitful hearts*.

The *degree* of this deceitfulness of the heart is confessedly great. The prophet uses no measured terms—"it is deceitful *above all things.*" When we trace it in its effects, this expression will not be considered extravagant, nor resolved into mere "Eastern hyperbole." That which deceives *all*, and *deceives all with ease*, whether defective or acute in penetration, whether weak or strong in the faith, whether aware of its wiles,

and armed against its assaults, or sitting in fancied security, whether with their will or against it, may surely be pronounced "*deceitful above all things*," and *all this* does the *deceitful heart*. It has put to nought the wisdom of the sage, and triumphed over the piety of the saint; causing the wise man to become a fool, and the righteous man to "fall from his steadfastness." Over the ungodly it proves its power, by causing them to trust implicitly in its guidance, and then abusing the misplaced confidence to their ruin, by causing their evil way to "seem right unto" them, although "the end thereof is the chambers of death," and by crying to them, "Peace, peace," and inducing them to believe the assurance, although the God of truth has declared from the heavens, and proclaimed over the wide earth, that "there is no peace to the wicked." And the *righteous* show their sense of it in their fears, their watchings, and, alas! we must add, in their *occasional discomfitures*.

The first specific manifestation of this deceitful heart which we shall notice, is its apparently *unnatural re-action upon self*, that is, upon its possessor. Metaphysicians may possibly object to this distinction of man from himself—this consideration of the heart, as separate from, and acting upon its possessor; but the phraseology is current, and well understood by *plain* persons. Just as certainly as the body can injure itself, and

the outward man destroy himself, just so certainly can the heart deceive itself, and the inward or spiritual man be instrumental to his own undoing.

It is a strange, but still a certain and melancholy truth, that men are generally their own worst enemies; and that most of their corruptions and calamities are chargeable upon themselves. They are, indeed, in the present world linked by various and strong ties to others, on whom their happiness or misery is in a certain degree dependent; they are so much affected by various circumstances over which they have little or no control, as to be termed, not unaptly, the "very creatures of circumstance;" and they are exposed to temptations from within and from without; from the *world around them*, and the *world of spirits beyond them*. "All these things are indeed against them," and have been plausibly and boldly urged by some, as virtual and valid apologies for all sin and all error. The spirit of self-excuse, which began with the first sin that defiled the earth, still continues to deceive its inhabitants. There is still the same shifting of the blame from the personal offender, to some primary instigator, some remote agent, some proximate accessory. *Things* as well as *persons*, *human events*, or supposed *super-human agencies*, are seized upon as the convenient scape-goats of human iniquity. *One* pleads the iron force of destiny or of necessity; another solaces himself

with the pleasing thought, that, at the worst, he is haplessly bound around with a chain or combination of circumstances, which he could not break; another, that he was misled by the counsels or example of human corrupters; and another, that he was tempted by the arch-deceiver; so that, were we to admit every plea that is offered in bar of judgment, in extenuation of self, we should find no original, independent, responsible transgressors in the world; and when the *Judge* should come to institute an inquiry, and to mete out retribution, there would be *no subjects for punishment*, but many objects of *great compassion*.

By such vain conceits and fallacious reasonings, however, "let no man deceive himself." In a restricted sense, subordinately to the watchings of his good providence, and the monitions of his good spirit, God has made each of us his own keeper, and intrusted to his personal care the conservation of his own happiness. We are individual and independent agents, and each one shall bear his own responsibility, and be answerable for his own sin. "The father shall not bear the iniquity of the son, nor the son that of the father." The tempter shall not screen the tempted, nor shall the enticing leader bear the guilt of his deluded follower. The attempts of others, indeed, to lead us astray will be charged to them as *their* sin, but the *yielding* to those attempts will be imputed to us as *ours*. No man

can be completely deluded by others, who does not first deceive himself. So that after all the subtle reasonings of ingenious self-defence, "*the deceitful heart,*" *acting upon itself, is at last in fault.*

We have pronounced this re-action of the heart upon itself to be unnatural; and assuredly it is so. We read (whether truly or fabulously it matters little,) of serpents which, in the agony of a wounded body, or in the impotency of unavailing rage, turn their fangs upon themselves, and infuse their own venom into the life-blood of their own veins, to their speedy death. Man, instigated by "the Old Serpent," that "murderer from the beginning," occasionally lifts up his arm, not merely against a brother's life, but to shed the more sacred blood which courses through his own veins. Nature shudders at the act; and society, indignant and abhorrent at its perpetration, casts out the self-dishonoured corpse, from all the decencies and charities of Christian sepulture—from all the sacred associations and sympathies connected with *consecrated ground*—from that *city of the dead*, which the calls and actings of *God*, and not the rashness of *man*, has peopled. Now we can view it in no other light than as a suicidal act, when the *spirit*, the *heart*, thus turns *its venom upon itself*, *poisons the springs of its own purity and happiness*, and, at last, *destroys its own spiritual life.*

There are two great classes of those self-deceived, that is, of those whom the "*deceitful heart*" misleads. The *one*, are abused unconsciously, by this deceptive heart; the *other*, are wittingly and willingly deceived; accessories to the fraud that is practised upon themselves. The *first* are either ignorant of their danger, or heedless of its prevention. They are honest in intention, and apparently resolute in purpose. They neither design evil, nor suspect its possibility. Even when warned of that possibility, their language is, "Is thy servant a dog that he should do these things?"

In regard to all the evidences and warnings of spiritual danger, they seem to be blind, and deaf, and "slow of heart to believe." In this spirit they go forth adventurously, if not presumptuously; and in the same spirit they fall *grievously*, causing the "enemy to blaspheme." The tempter of their souls comes to them in "an hour that they think not of," in a place where they least expect him, in a guise which they could not suspect, and with honied words of persuasive eloquence, and alluring baits of enticement which they cannot resist. He seems to them to stand in the very Eden of God; he is "transformed (to their eye) into an angel of light;" he seems to speak to them the language of heavenly wisdom, to counsel them for their good, to urge them to their happiness. The evil and deceitful heart within them,



is leagued with him for their delusion, whispering that his counsel is just, and that the way of enjoyment is made plain before them. What wonder, then, if in an evil hour they should stretch forth the hand, and "pluck and eat;" and if, coming too late to "the knowledge of evil," as well as "good," their eyes being opened to perceive that they are "poor, and helpless, and naked," cowering amidst some of the pitiful subterfuges of earth, as though the eye and the arm of Jehovah could not reach them there, and called forth by his piercing interrogation, addressed to them through their conscience, "Where art thou?" "Why hast thou hid thyself?" "What hast thou done?" they should feel with bitterness, and plead in extenuation, sensible to themselves that the plea was vain, that the heart to which they trusted was "*deceitful* above all things," and that they had become the victims of its guile. Yet these are comparatively a venial class. They fall rather through infirmity and surprise, than through deliberation; and when they "come to themselves," when they awake from their delusion, "as one awaketh out of wine," feeling that they have been disgracefully overcome, yet scarcely knowing *how* they have been overcome, they are generally filled with shame and confusion, and humble themselves before God and man. They "repent and do their first works," and God, we may scripturally trust, will accept their repent-

ance. Their personal and bitter experience of the deceitfulness of the heart will, we may hope, make them more stable in the way of righteousness. Having received the record of pardon, when they had deserved and expected the sentence of death, there is ground to believe, that they will "go and sin no more."

There is, however, *another class* who are *willingly* and *wittingly* deluded by the *deceitful heart*; to whom the deception is pleasant, as it seems to enlarge the boundaries of indulgence. These cheerfully lend themselves to the work of self-infatuation. It costs them more of time and trouble, and searching of heart, to force themselves into the belief of a lie, and the practice of sin, than it would to receive and weigh the varied evidences of the truth, and to learn the discipline of righteousness. "The deceitful heart," instead of being resisted and regulated, is nourished and cherished, and encouraged to repeat its flatteries and falsehoods. Now it is possible, after many doubts and misgivings, at last to settle down into a delusion that is comparatively quiet and comfortable, and, at the same time, fatal and irreversible. It is possible to hear the reiteration of known errors, until the mind becomes accustomed to entertain them, loses sight of their true character, and finally mistakes them for truth. It was once well remarked, that "a man may at

length come to believe his own lie;"\* and doubtless there are many veterans in the fields of embellished narrative, and falsely boasted achievement, who would be willing to do battle for the truth of their doubtful and doubted tales, and who would die in the firm faith of their authenticity.

The class of these willingly deceived is numerous, embracing alike the deluded in sentiment and the depraved in life. Under it must be ranked those who, "not liking to retain *God* in their knowledge," strive, contrary to evidence, conviction, nature, and feeling, to reason themselves out of the belief of *his existence*, or, at least, out of the belief of his *presence*, his *providence*, his *moral government*, and his *future retribution*.

It embraces those also who, impatient of the moral restraints and holy requisitions of the Gospel, endeavour to free themselves at once, by cheating themselves into the persuasion that the yoke which they find so galling, was fashioned and imposed by the hand of man, and not of God—that it was the contrivance of priestcraft, or of state policy, to cramp the energies and over-awe the spirits of a subject world. In order, indeed, to cherish this persuasion, with such confidence as would measurably insure their comfort, they must

\* By the late Dr. John M. Mason, D. D. of New-York, Provost of Columbia College.

eradicate early and deep impressions; combat, with a settled and reasonable prepossession, in its favour; stifle the best feelings, and extinguish the holiest hopes of their being. All this they would gladly do; but fearful lest their own hearts, deceitful as they are, should not be able to beguile them into a scepticism sufficiently stable for their comfort, they flee for confirmation in their infidelity, to any bold pretender who may boast the skill of teaching unbelief, surely and thoroughly, in a few easy lessons. They "compass sea and land," to make themselves the "proselytes" of infidelity, only that when they are so they may be "tenfold more the children of" corruption than they were before. *Nominally* their proselytism is complete, but *virtually* it is never so. They do but *half believe* what they *entirely profess*. Enough of original conviction still remains to mar all the satisfaction they would otherwise receive from their more recent and unsettling theories. They are ever and anon harassed by the intruding thought, that *the truth* is with those *whom they have left*. The heart within them, wicked and deceitful as it is, still feels, and *bitterly* feels, its severance from the peaceful and once-loved "household of faith." Like the ejected spirit in the Saviour's parable, it has wandered over "dry places, seeking rest," but "finding none;" and "it begins to say to itself," O that I could "return unto my house whence I came

out!" Many "a longing, lingering look," does it cast towards the object of its first faith and love; but it feels that between *it* and *them* sin and scepticism have caused "a great" and an impassable "gulf to be fixed." It experiences many relentings, and yearnings, and drawings towards the Author of salvation; but they are all counteracted by its loss of moral strength—by its impotence to moral good—by the indomitable pride of professed opinion—by the perversion of its feelings—by the loss of its reverential impressions, and by that ultimate searedness of conscience which ever follows in the train of wilfully acquired infidelity.

This, then, is the operation of the deceitful heart upon those who are willing that it should deceive them. It enables them to apostatize from God, but not to be at ease in their apostacy; to reject their Saviour, and still not to expect salvation without him. After all their efforts to become *firm believers in unbelief*, this at last is their pitiable state, to be left, amidst the wanings of age or of disease, at the close of life, on the verge of eternity, poor miserable doubters of the safety of their own doubting creed, to lie down in death under the awful apprehension, that it *may not* be annihilation; and after death to prove that it *is not* amid the unending torments of the eternal world.

The deceitful heart has now been traced in

influence upon self. Let us examine next its influence upon *the conduct and conversation among men*. To these it naturally lends a false colouring. The same principle which would prompt us "to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think," would, from its very nature, dispose us to seek the favour and the applause of men by unfair means, and to "appear *outwardly* righteous before men, without being indeed inwardly righteous in "the temper and disposition of our souls." We allude now not to the quality of *deceitfulness*, in the peculiar and restricted use of the term, but merely to that assumption of fictitious character, that semblance of excellencies not really possessed, which is so common in the world. As in the vegetable kingdom, some of its largest productions, some of its fairest and most tempting fruits, are those which are hollow at the heart or at the core; so in the moral world, with a fair and imposing outside show, we often find hollowness and rottenness *within*. A distinction must here be observed between a mere decent regard to the opinion of the world, or a desire to preserve appearances for religion's sake, and the hypocritical pretension to a state of feeling, a stamp of character not possessed, with a view to imposition upon others, and applause or esteem to self. The former may be prompted by the renewed heart, and is entirely consistent with the character of a good man; the latter is the offspring of the deceitful

heart, and is in perfect accordance with its origin. It has been well said, "that no man is a hero before his valet-de-chambre." Carrying out the same idea, we may say, that no man is entirely alike in *public* and in *private*. The presence of strangers, especially of those whose piety we revere, whose approbation we desire, or whose censure we dread, does impose a restraint of which all must be conscious, and under which we all speak and act with peculiar guardedness and care. The very best of men have their little blemishes and foibles. These afford proper subjects for personal humiliation, for self-discipline and self-correction. But surely they need not be displayed to every eye, nor proclaimed, as from the house-top, to every ear. Nay, there is an instinctive feeling, a chariness of character, closely allied to the great law and desire of self-preservation, which pleads for their removal from common observation. We as naturally endeavour to throw over them the mantle of charitable concealment, as we would, in the event of an unexpected intrusion into the domestic circle, remove from sight any unseemly object, or cease from any private avocations or converse with which strangers had nothing to do. In yielding to this strong and common impulse, we do but act with that tenderness towards ourselves which the great law of Christian charity bids us exercise towards our brethren. We are bidden to "love others as

ourselves," but we are no where commanded to love ourselves *less* than them. And this impulse derives additional force from the salutary fear, ever present to a pious and a Christian mind, of wounding the friends or emboldening the enemies of religion. This decorous regard to appearances, then, springing from a sense of self-respect, respect to the world, and zeal for the honour of God, is widely different from systematic hypocrisy; from the entire-assumption of a character to which we have no claims; from always going abroad in a mask! The *good man* would rather hide than obtrude, even his *infirmities*, because they are inconsistent with the general rectitude of which he is humbly and thankfully conscious, and the attractiveness of which he would be loth to mar. The *evil man*, in order to deceive others, feigns qualities and apes a character which are in fact the very opposite of his own. The difference is here obvious. Yet, such is the perfect singleness and sincerity of genuine religion, that even this instinctive desire to avoid "all appearance of evil," is never permitted to infringe upon a sacred regard to truth, to prevent candid acknowledgments and humble confessions on the proper occasions, nor to spoil that openness and ingenuousness of demeanour, which is inseparable from a guileless spirit, and which never fails to adorn unpretending piety. The motto which is written upon the heart, and assented to



by the lips of every real Christian, is, that *we should rather labour to be what we wish to appear, than strive to appear what we are not*; a sentiment which has been so often and so variously expressed, as to render it difficult to ascertain to whom it is to be originally ascribed, and to have become, in fact, the common maxim and common property of the religious public.\*

There is something sufficiently revolting in the *attempt to impose upon men*. There is, however, something horrible and impious even in the *thought of imposition upon God*, of “lying unto the Holy Ghost;” and yet even to this extent *men are occasionally carried*, by the evil promptings of the deceitful heart. Seriously indeed, and after due reflection, the idea could scarcely be entertained, that *God could* be deceived, since all who believe in him at all must acknowledge his omniscience; that to him are known all the secrets of the heart. The mockery, then, of seeming, but heartless devotion, must originally aim at the deception of man rather *than of God*, and be a part of that systematic imposition which has already been noticed; and yet the ease with which men mistake the mere externals and formularies of devotion for devotion itself, the entire complacency with which they rest in their observ-

\* The sentiment will be found, however formally expressed, in the writings of the pious Cecil.

ance, and even challenge to themselves a certain degree of credit with men, and of meetness for reward before God, show the danger of settling down at last into the practical adoption of the impious thought, that the motives of action, the designs and workings of the heart, might be concealed from God; and that he contemplates and will reward *acts* rather than *principles*. Enter into a Christian assembly! What a delightful spectacle do we there behold! How many traces present themselves of solemn feeling, of devout engagedness! How difficult is it perhaps for the most practised eye to discern, by the outward appearance, between the sincere believer and the worldling—between “him that feareth God and him that feareth him not.” How natural would be the impression, that this was indeed “an assembly of the saints,” “among whom God was greatly feared”—and that they were assembled to “glorify him as though with one heart and one voice.” Yet, alas! is it a breach of charity—is it aught but the expression of an unavoidable yet painful conviction to assert that much of this is the *semblance* of devotion rather than its *reality*? that with many the heart has little or no concern in the homage of the bended knee—the accents of prayer or praise that fall from the lips—the attitude of deep attention, while the ear seems to court and welcome, and drink in with delight every word of exhortation? Would it not be a

refinement upon charity to imagine that the Christian sanctuary presented no scenes nor actors similar to those in the Jewish synagogue in Ezekiel's day? that among *us* there are none "who come as God's people cometh, and sit before him as his people, and hear his words and will not do them?" who "with their mouth show much love, but whose heart goeth after covetousness?" to whom the voice of the ministering servant is "as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well upon an instrument?" who have "set up their idols in their heart, and the stumbling block of their iniquity before ~~their~~ face?" And is it not most reasonable to suppose that God would now say, as he did to their prototypes of old, "Are ye come to inquire of *me*? As I live, I will not be inquired of by you."


The privileges of the sanctuary, and an active participation in its solemnities, are not indeed to be restricted to *those only* who are under the full influence of religious feeling. This would be a most condemnable "shutting up of the kingdom of heaven against men." The fact, that men are not religiously disposed, so far from excluding them from the ordinances of public worship, is the very reason why they should seek them the more earnestly, and be admitted to them the more freely. Viewing these ordinances as means of grace and conversion, we must feel that they were

especially intended for those who most need "the grace that bringeth salvation." If the righteous require them for their comfort and their growth in grace, others need them still more to quicken them to repentance—to "renew in them a right spirit"—to give them the first breathings of the spiritual life—the first elements of the Christian character.

Even among worldly and unsanctified men, too, an attendance upon the sanctuary, a decent and respectful compliance with its external forms, an observance of the appropriate decorums of time and place, would not justify the sweeping charge of deliberate hypocrisy. A general and perfectly sincere respect for religion and its institutions—the latent desire or hope of obtaining a special and individual interest in its benefits—the over-awing influence of its doctrines and services—the operation of the social principle, and an irresistible sympathy with those who do "worship God in spirit and in truth"—these will sufficiently account for their apparent devoutness, without resorting to the uncharitable solution, that they are feigning what they do not feel, and "playing antics before high heaven." And God forbid that any dark, unworthy suspicions, any harsh imputations on the part of the confessedly religious, should turn their feet wholly from God's house, or make them feel, while there, that they might only be cold and careless spectators, lest any exhibi-

tion of lively feeling should put in question their sincerity, and lest their very "prayer" should be deemed "an abomination before God."

Yet assuredly there is danger that this participation in the *outward duties*, without the *inward* and *life-giving spirit* of devotion, may end, if it did not *begin*, in hypocrisy. The means may soon be mistaken for the end; "the form" substituted for "the power of godliness;" and the deceiving and deceived heart may forget its own hollowness in the loud tone and orthodox language of its professions. The seeming worshipper, himself cheated into a belief of his own sincerity, may at length, with the Pharisee, thank God for his observances and offerings, when he ought to be "smiting upon his breast," and asking forgiveness for "the iniquity," the dread iniquity of what ought to have been "his holy things." He may pride himself upon services, the very remembrance of which should fill him with shame, and humble him to the dust. This is the last exhibition we shall present of "the deceitful heart." May the guilt which it involves, and the consequences to which it naturally leads, tend to open the eyes and awaken the repentance of those "who have a name to live, while they are counted dead before God."



## CHAPTER III.

### THE DECEIVED HEART.

"He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot turn again, and deliver his own soul."

"If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!"

"Take heed to yourselves that your heart be not deceived."

ERRONEOUS principles are often esteemed but little dangerous, provided the *heart* be right in its intentions and feelings. The kind and accommodating creed of modern liberalism makes it a matter of minor importance *who* is worshipped, or *how* he is worshipped, if there be only *sincerity* in the worshipper. Now, the great difficulty in the way of this pseudo charity is, that it proves so much, and extends so far, as to equalize all truth and falsehood, all right and wrong. It sets out, moreover, with a supposition which in itself involves an impossibility: for the heart is not and cannot be right, when it is subject to the warping influence of erroneous and debasing views, when it enshrines principles that are radically wrong in the holiest sanctuary of feeling, guards them with

its most watchful jealousy, and embodies them in action with its most fervent enthusiasm, and its most active zeal.

"He feedeth on ashes," said the evangelic prophet, in reference to the maker and worshipper of idols, whose folly he had so sarcastically and inimitably exposed; "a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?" If the reader will be at the pains to consult the forceful chapter in which these words occur, he will doubtless acknowledge that the keenness of the satire is proportioned to the fatuity and heinousness of the offence. It furnishes us with a case admirably in point. Those against whom it directs its pointed sarcasm were doubtless *sincere*. A species of zeal sent them out to the forest to choose their tree, cheered their labours while they were "making it after the figure of a man, according to the beauty of a man." With a liberality worthy of a better cause, they lavished the silver and the gold for its covering and adorning. There was piety in their hearts when they knelt before its shrine, and fervour in the supplications which they there poured forth, in the sacrifices which they unsparingly offered. We see the confidence of assured belief in their system stamped upon *their every word and act*. Sensitively alive to the honour of their chosen idols, shocked at the very idea of unbelief in their power, prompt to

penish disrespect to their altars as sacrilege, they would have been ready, if need required, to war or to die in their cause. According to a fashionable hypothesis, then, their unquestionable sincerity should have excused and sanctified their manifest delusion; and they should have been as much accepted when they bowed themselves, in the darkness of their benighted understandings, before "the stocks and the stones," "called upon Baal," or "poured out drink-offerings to the queen of heaven," as though they had been worshipping Jehovah with a rational and an holy worship. Yet what is the fact? What saith the inspired record? After all this laborious zeal and costly devotion, it gives the disparaging comment, that they are feeding on ashes—that a deceived heart hath turned them aside—"that these makers of graven images are all of them vanity," and "that their delectable things shall not profit."

Here then is the case of men who were sincerely and systematically devout, while every step in their course was a new remove from truth, from God, and from salvation. The blindness of the mind deceived and perverted even the willing heart; and this *deceived heart*, acting on false principles, and under a gross delusion, turned them into the pathway of error and death; and the delusion so increased and thickened around them, that they could "by no means deliver own soul," nor even ascertain that there



the mischief of having "the *heart* deceived," by the specious but false reasonings of the *head* : of having it do *wrong*, with all the good intention, and zeal, and engagedness of supposed *doing right*.

And in this kind of self-deception there is something very hopeless. When men sin from the love of it, there is hope that their transgressions may stare them in the face—that the bitterness of the fruits of iniquity may cause them to "eschew evil and do good." But not so in this case. The conscience which should guide them is itself deceived. "The light that is in them is darkness, and how great is that darkness!" They *sin conscientiously—sin on principle*. The offence is religiously committed; and it is a part of their religion to retain and to glory in it. In all such cases, if there be change, it must come from *without* and not from *within*. The soul would *resist* the first breathings of doubt, the first incipient desires for a change, as treason against its principles, as a sin against its light. So that, unless some providential circumstances should compel their attention to the evidence of truth, or unless God should specially enlighten and move them by his good Spirit, the honest votaries of error seem doomed to have its chains riveted for ever. And this will account satisfactorily for the perpetuity of many of those delusions which seem so gross, that we naturally wonder that they have not fallen

by their own weight—so unsound through all their parts, that their adhesion during so long a period is a very mystery. It is piety, mistaken piety, that has thrown around them an imaginary sacredness—guarded them with jealous vigilance—propped up their weakness with the pillars of her own strength, and kept them together by her powerful cement.

If such be the crippling power of error, if it thus maims the whole intellectual and spiritual man, incapacitating him for efficient and profitable action, how devotedly should we all cling to “the truth as it is in Jesus,” and implore and follow the guidance of that good Spirit, who alone can “guide us into all truth.” Suffer not, O Lord, “a deceived heart to turn us aside” from the path of thy commandments, but keep us by thy word and Holy Spirit, “that we may have a right judgment in all things, and evermore rejoice in his holy comfort, through thy Son, our Lord.”

But again; the heart may be deceived by the corruption of the life.

This, if not so *hopeless* of cure as that already noticed, is certainly *more guilty*. We may hope that God would “show mercy” to those who “sinned ignorantly and in unbelief,” who cherished *the wrong*, believing it to be *the right*; but no extenuation suggests itself to the most benevolent heart for that delusion which originates in a *confirmed love of iniquity*. Let the debasing

effect of habitual sin once have triumphed over the original convictions of rectitude, so that what was once acknowledged to be sinful is deemed innocent, and, unless there be some sudden and powerful stroke to break the spell, some startling providence, or some unusual appeal of the grace of God, the grossness of perception, and the deadness to feeling, will increase with every year's continuance in sin. I tremble for that man whose arguments are his lusts; who has held "the lie in his right hand" until he would sooner lose that right hand than relinquish it; whose heart is deceived, because he dreads to have it *undeceived*. "There is more hope of a fool than of him." He is sunk in the imbecile helplessness of a paralyzed spirit, and he wants not merely the energy *to seek*, but the heart *to desire, renovation*. Let all, then, guard with peculiar care against that worst of delusions, which is reflected back to the mind from an evil heart, or to the *heart* from an *evil life*. It is hard indeed to dissipate the mystic influence of superstition, and to convince him who worships an idol, believing it to be God, that it is only *wood* or *stone*. But he who cares not *what* it is, and worships it only because he delights to sit at its impure feasts, and to mingle in its licentious rites, will probably worship it to the end, and resolve that it shall be *his god*, because it is the pander to his evil appetites, and the patron of his unhallowed indulgences!

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE GENERAL DEPRAVITY OF THE HUMAN HEART.

- “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.”
- “How shall he be clean that is born of a woman?”
- “Whence hath this man all these things?”
- “Behold! I was shapen in iniquity.”
- “Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries,” &c. &c.

THE native corruption of the human heart is not a matter of *mere opinion*, but of *fact*: to be decided by the evidence of facts. Its theoretical discussion, as a mere speculative tenet, has served “to darken counsel,” while it needlessly multiplied words. The direct appeal to experience and to facts relieves the subject from much of its seeming perplexity, and brings it within narrow and well-defined limits.

That corruption does exist, that moral evil is in the world, is not denied. Few, if any, would contend for absolute human impeccability. Should any carry their views to that extent, the test of our Lord, “Let him that is without sin among

you cast the first stone," could scarcely be applied in vain. The question then concerns *not the existence*, but the *origin* of corruption in us individually. It is here that the two prominent hypotheses on the subject separate: the one resolving it entirely into *the result of imitation*, and the other contending, that *it is inherent in our nature*; that *we are born the heirs of corruption*. The entirely opposite directions in which these branch off account for the subsequent and wide difference between them, through the entire course of doctrinal theology. It is impossible, in the very nature of things, that they should at all coincide; but they must of necessity go farther and farther from each other, until each has been carried to its ultimate limit. The views entertained in reference to a Saviour and a Sanctifier, follow in each case respectively, from the impressions under which investigation is commenced, and from the point toward which the inquirer has resolutely "set his face." The mind will naturally decide upon the agents of spiritual restoration, and upon the Gospel as a restorative system, in accordance with the ideas previously held of our state and condition by nature. We are prepared to expect from the firm assertor of derived and radical corruption, the consistent acknowledgment of the consequent doctrines of atonement and sanctification; while it is equally natural to imagine, that, **he who contended for native inherent innocence**

would also contend for native inherent power, an ability for self-sanctification; that his theory of *sinning by imitation* would be content with a Saviour, who should **save** us, not by an adequate atonement, but by a lustrous and constraining example. Let us see then which theory, as to the origin and existence of personal corruption, is the best supported by reason, facts, and Scripture!

Before entering upon the full consideration of the facts and evidences that go to support the *theory of a depraved nature*, it may be proper to premise that the *theory of imitation* does not seem to meet the demands of the case, since it is not universally applicable, and since, from the nature of the models kept before the *eye*, imitation would often lead naturally to a state the very opposite from that corruption of which it is held the cause and the solution. Permit me to ask the reader's candid and close attention, while I enter into a more full exemplification of this.

The assumption or hypothesis is, that man is born pure; free from any taint or vitiation of nature, any predisposition to evil. Why then, let it be asked, should he be necessarily contaminated or corrupted by those with whom he is constrained to associate? How came they to be so contaminating? *They too*, by the hypothesis, were born pure; whence then *their* corruption? Was that also derived from example? Then go to *their*-

*examples*, and from them to *theirs*; and thus go on, pushing back the tide of human corruption nearer and nearer to its source, and to the source of time; transferring the guilt of the child upon the parent, of the young upon their seniors, of one generation upon that which *went before*. Continue this retrospective and retracing process to its utmost limit—where will it land you? At the last it must have an end; for you can only go back to the origin of man, the infancy of time. Corruption is confessedly universal now. Either then it was coeval with the creation of man, or it was introduced at some period subsequent to that creation. If *coeval* with it, it must be charged upon God, the Creator; and the strange derogatory, if not impious idea, must be cherished, that a pure and holy being created impure and unholy beings, while he still declared, that they were created (that is, morally) “in his own image.” Or if we take the other ground, and suppose corruption to have crept in at some subsequent period, we know not how, and we know not when, still the question will then recur, *How* did it *originate*? Whence did the *first* corrupter of others become an evil doer, and learn *his* depravity? Here the theory is at fault. Go back to a time when there was no such evil example, and, to use the language of a distinguished writer, “either virtuous men set sinful examples, which is a plain contradiction, or men became sinful

without sinful examples.”\* The first murderer did not learn from any other to imbue his hands in a brother’s blood; his prompting or teaching must have been from the *heart within*, not from the *corruption without*. And a similar difficulty lies heavy and irremovable upon the doctrine of merely imitative transgression in regard to the first commission of any and every other open sin. You see in the child of a few years motions towards that which is evil, which were taught him by no instructor. You find the recluse, in the calm and sacred quietness of his retirement, glowing with the same unhallowed fires, and mentally and spiritually prepared for the same developments of corruption, which are found in the wide and evil world; and you see the nursling of piety, the child whose cradle was sanctified by the prayers of parental devotion, and whose early steps were guided into the way of purity and of peace, and all whose early associations were those which should have linked him to virtue, still “breaking the bands, and casting away the cords” of God, and rushing furiously into the very excesses of evil, even as the horse, no longer “held by bit or bridle,” “rusheth into the battle.”

Passing from *general* corruption to *special* sins, we often find man’s dominant and besetting sins to be such as characterize *none* with whom

\* Dwight in his *Theology*, vol. i. ser. 3.



he has been in habits of familiar intercourse, such as are diametrically opposed to his general course of education, and to the examples he would naturally have copied. This seems irreconcilable with the theory of imitation, and to plead strongly for an *indigenous* rather than an *exotic* origin.

Once more: even where example has been pure, and has been successful; where it has induced men to "be followers of that which is good;" still there have been *innate tendencies* to evil, over which it has triumphed, *hardly* triumphed. *The tendencies* were constitutional, natural, inherent, and proved *inherent* corruption. *The example* was *from without*, and, so far from accounting for the tendencies, or promoting their developement, *stifled* them in the embryo. Here then, we have *undeveloped corruption without example, contrary to example, and put down by virtuous example!*

Reasoning philosophically, then, it would seem that the theory of imitation must be rejected, as insufficient to account for *universal* depravity. If we are driven from the ground of *imitative corruption*, it only remains to us to acknowledge *generic corruption*, a corruption of our whole race, continued and perpetuated by *natural transmission*.

In reasoning with those who admit the scriptural account of the *introduction of sin*, we have

the advantage of a common starting place, to which we can go back, of certain first principles, to which we can recur. But this doctrine, or rather *fact*, of transmission, seems to force itself even upon those who deny that account. If any, improperly as we have seen, should contend that we are now as we came out of the Creator's hands, that sin was coeval with our race, still, as it has descended to us, (not by mere *imitation*,) that descent is evidently *transmission*, and the corruption thus naturally transmitted is certainly *inherent* and *generic*.

Supposing again, corruption to have been introduced *subsequently* and *gradually*, still the vitiation of our nature, whether we date from its commencement or its consummation, has certainly been perpetuated. *Here again is transmission*. Now the scriptural account, while it avoids the inconsistencies consequent on our supposed creation in sinfulness, and also the ambiguity and vagueness of an unknown origin, still asserts no more than *this fact of transmission*; a fact to which we must subscribe, whether we reject or receive that account; for this *law of transmission* we shall find to be one of the settled, established laws of animal existence.

In the book of Job, where the doctrine of derived guilt finds a full recognition, and a conspicuous place, it is very pertinently asked, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?"

to which it is as pertinently answered, "Not one;" and it would probably puzzle those philosophizing objectors, to whom this doctrine of derivation is so completely "a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence," to give any other or better reply. Is it not reasonable, and in perfect accordance with all the analogies of the animal and even vegetable creation, to acknowledge the derivation of this corruption, no matter *when* or *how* we suppose it to have originated, from generation to generation, and consequently its inherency in the very elements of the moral constitution? Would it not argue a suspension, or rather an inversion of that great law of *like producing like*, which we find recorded in the sacred volume, and visibly and indelibly impressed upon the whole creation of God, if, sin having once entered into the world, a sinless offspring had descended from sinful parents? I enter not here into any curious questions concerning the origin of the human soul, or the extent to which, consistently with the fact of its being formed by God, it takes a bias or colouring from natural descent; but this much is unquestionable, that many of the most striking peculiarities, not only of *body*, but of mind, temper, and feeling, are naturally transmitted. Eccentric habits of thought, and madness in all its varieties, are continued from parent to child, and from generation to generation, perhaps for centuries. And, to notice a less equivocal case, how often do

we find a certain singularity of temperament, or stamp of character, so long affixed to, or identified with a family or kindred, that we associate the idea of it with the very name of that family or kindred! Account for this as we may, the fact is unquestionable. If then, individual traits may be communicated through a long line of descent, would it not be most strange, if a *general corruption* of the whole spiritual nature, in those who went before us, should not have come down to us? And, whatever may have been the original excellence, do we not observe alike throughout the animal and vegetable kingdom, that whenever degeneracy or deterioration has commenced, through any means or causes whatsoever, it is propagated, and even increased, until a change is induced in the circumstance?

Since, then, corruption, universal corruption, without any exceptions, has confessedly existed in the ages antecedent to us, I should expect *a priori*, that it would come to us necessarily, as a part of our inheritance, instead of being subsequently fortuitously acquired, by the simple process of imitation.

Let us turn now to the *positive* evidence of our natural corruption. We have said, at the outset, that it was a question, not of opinion, but of fact, to be decided by the evidence of facts. To that let us appeal. The first field of observation is certainly *self*. If we are at all impartial, con-

sciousness will certainly reveal to us much of what passes within. A hasty glance at the external conduct, would probably enable us to trace many of our misdeeds to corrupt example; but then, if we enter into the secrets of our own hearts, and note the mode in which we are affected by such example, we shall find an innate readiness for its influence, and a repugnance to example of an opposite nature, which evidently argue a prior and inherent corruption, of which external evil merely and easily takes hold, and which often effectually neutralizes external good. The combustible materials of evil are antecedently *within*; temptation, or example from without, is only the spark that ignites them. In an internal and deep examination of this nature, our business is *not* with *acts*, but with *thoughts*, *sensations*, *emotions*, *desires*, *motives*, *principles*, *tendencies*. Now, with *these* it is contended, imperfection, impurity, and positive sinfulness mingle, and these, therefore, independently of external developments, fix the charge of corruption upon our souls. If their promptings be resisted from prudential considerations, from moral motives, or from the influences of grace, still, if we do but *feel* them, it is enough to decide the point; and *who* that knows himself will say that he feels them not? Who is there that can lay his hand upon his heart, or "lift it up towards heaven, and swear by him that liveth for ever," that he is

never prompted to acts which reason, judgment, and conscience forbid, or indisposed to duties which he knows to be obligatory? Who is there that is utterly unconscious of vicious tendencies, not superinduced, but evidently constitutional? Who but has often felt, what the apostle so feelingly describes, "to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not?" And who is there that has not, under this humiliating conviction of perverse inclination to evil, and impotency to good, occasionally exclaimed substantially with the same apostle, "Oh wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Our hearts are here the best witnesses; and they most clearly tell us that we are in a state of present and grievous degeneracy, that moral derangement and diseases, and destructive tendencies, as surely characterize the soul as do physical evils the body! Even were *conduct* then universally pure, yet an inspection of *our hearts* would show that we were not "*pure within*;" how much more then are we compelled to the acknowledgment of our inherent depravity, when the whole surface of society is defiled by the outpourings and overflowings of ungodliness, when "imperfection mars the beauty of (all) holiness," "stains the pride and the glory of all excellency?" when "there is not one that doeth perfect righteousness, no not one," but when the whole earth "mourneth because of transgrea-

sions, and is defiled under the inhabitants thereof?"

From self, let us now turn to the world around us, take the most favourable specimens of human character, look upon that which is styled *native amiability*, in all its attractiveness, and then say if you do not see rather the remains, the ruins, the perception of good, and the desire after excellence, than full and perfect excellence itself. And even Christian, sanctified excellence, where the principle is perfect, is still imperfect in the execution or developement, through the hinderance of that innate corruption, so that every man that lives and breathes, unrenewed or renewed, is a living and speaking proof of its truth. They that exhibit it most, feel and acknowledge it least, but their conduct speaks it for them. They that *display it least*, feel it *most*, and confess it freely; and their feelings and their words alike attest, that there is a fault, or depravation of nature, which even grace itself cannot wholly subdue.

"Our hearts condemn us" as sinful, and lead us to perceive and "condemn sin" in others. "God is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things." This corruption, palpable to ourselves, could not have escaped his piercing ken. Let us mark then the testimony of his word. "If we receive the witness of men, the *witness of God is greater*." A mere transcription of the *many* and strong texts which bear upon the point,

without any remark, would swell this chapter wholly beyond its proper limits. We shall merely point the reader to a few of the most express, assured that many others will recur to him in the ordinary course of biblical reading. That strong expression from the book of Job, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one." Especially when compared with the expression used by Bildad, in the 25th chapter, "How then can man be justified with God? or how shall he be clean that is born of a woman?" would seem to fix it, as at least the sense of that early age, evidently approved of God, that we are born in corruption. The strong language of the Psalmist, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin hath my mother conceived me," attests the continuance of the same belief to his day. In Isaiah there is evident reference to primeval transgression, and to its transmission to us, when God, by the prophet, declares—"Put me in remembrance: let us plead together: declare thou, that thou mayest be justified. Thy first father hath sinned, and thy teachers have transgressed against me." In other words, corruption has been from the beginning, and it has extended to all, even to the appointed teachers of the law. When the prophet Jeremiah declares that "the heart is deceitful above all things, and *desperately wicked*," he certainly does not allude to the corruption of morals or principles consequent on imitation, nor



to the condition of man under some peculiar circumstances, but to the *internal vitiation* of the *principle of action* in *all men*, at *all times*, under *all circumstances*. The language of the Saviour, already prominently presented to the reader's eye, is as decisive as it is comprehensive—"Those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies."\* This surely is conclusive. Instead of teaching us that the evil influence which vitiates thought, feeling, speech, and action, comes to us from the *external world*, it points us to the *busy little world within*. It tells us that in the *heart* is the deep and unfailing spring from which gushes forth every stream of unholy converse or conduct which defiles the man. It is a perfectly gratuitous assumption to say, that the reference is to the *heart previously corrupted by the world*, but in itself *naturally good*, since the outward manifestations of evil, the very words and deeds of iniquity which would most naturally be learned from others, are here described as *personal*, as self-originating, and since this imaginary *natural goodness* has not the warrant of *any scriptural support*. On the contrary, note the scriptural delineation of this natural mind, or heart, or of

\* St. Matthew xv. 18, 19.

“the natural man.” We are told that “the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”\* “The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.”† On individual passages of similar import I must not detain the reader’s attention. The evidence which they so convincingly afford, is rendered complete by a mere reference to the general scope and spirit of the Scriptures. Instead of the Utopian scheme of native innocence, and the original possession of all needful inclinations and powers for the discharge of present duty, and for the attainment of final salvation, the whole Scripture system is based on the strongly asserted fact of moral weakness and depravity. On any other supposition, the whole Gospel would be a *nullity* and a *contradiction*. Its Author and Finisher is proposed to us as what? As a *Physician*, a *Mediator* and *Intercessor*, a *Redeemer*, a *Saviour*. But why bring a *Physician* to those who are not morally diseased? Behold, to use the language of that Physician himself, “they that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.” Why provide a *Mediator*, an *Intercessor*, to those who were not alienated from the heart of their Father

\* 1 Cor. ii. 14.

† Rom. viii. 7.

and their God; who have free access to him themselves? Why speak of a *Redeemer* to those who were not in servitude, and who could justly take up the proud and boastful language of the Jew of old—"We be free; we were never in bondage to any man?" Why proclaim a *Saviour* to those to whom the way of salvation is opened already; who can *save themselves*? Surely we cannot imagine the Gospel to be a scheme without a design, or a superfluous and obtrusive offer of aid to those who were not in need. And the fact that Christ is offered *indiscriminately to all, under these peculiar and most expressive titles, and in all these gracious offices*, proves that the *vitiated state* of our nature is *universal*, and *universally the same*, and consequently not dependent upon *accidental causes*, proves that we are all "*born in sins,*" *born in servitude*; that the moral disease under which we all labour is *hereditary*, and therefore that we are utterly disqualified for self-restoration and self-salvation.

Scripture, then, concurs with reason and experience in discarding the idea of mere *imitative* depravity, and in maintaining the doctrine of transmitted *innate depravity*.

Let it not be supposed, that the question discussed so much at length, is needless and unimportant, and that instead of disputing as to the *origin* of corruption, Christians should merely unite for its *eradication*,

The theory reprobated seems to forbid all *radical* work in the matter of moral renovation. It teaches the parent an utterly fallacious mode of procedure, in regard to the moral training of his child. Taking it for granted, that the heart of his child is pure by nature, his single aim is to keep it pure: to save it from "the evil that is in the world." The corrupter is not suffered to come near the angel object of his affections. The very atmosphere is purified around him. And still in due season (and early indeed is that season,) evil displays itself, corruption breaks forth, and the amazed guardian asks, "Whence hath he these things," seeing that he came not into contact with the wicked and the wickedness of the world? I will answer you, O parent! His heart was **CONSTITUTIONALLY** corrupt, and you knew it not. It was *not good ground by nature*; yet you presumed upon the excellence of its soil, and the value of its spontaneous product. This is the natural result; thorns and briars, tares and weeds; a harvest of iniquity here, maturing for the fire of judgment hereafter.

And in reference to adults, the same theory is dangerous, because it assigns a wrong cause of personal corruption, and proscribes an utterly ineffectual discipline of amendment. It saith, Fear not for your *hearts*, they are good enough. There is dignity, nobleness, generous virtue in nature; but take care of others, they will mislead and

destroy you! The scriptural caution would, however, be this, (and never may my lips utter or my *pen* commend another,)—take heed of the evil without. “Go not into the way of evil men,” for their “communications may corrupt good morals;” but especially take heed *to yourselves*—look well to *the heart*. By nature “it is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked:” grace must renew it, and its renewal prepare it *for salvation*.

The difference, then, between the two theories is one of life and death. It involves the eternal interests of undying spirits. It is confessed on all sides, that the malignant pestilence of sin abounds, and speeds unnumbered souls to the second death. He who contends for its *invariably foreign origin*, who asserts, that by *its infectious nature* it is transmitted from realm to realm, from nation to nation, from man to man, and that, like the plague which desolates the East, it may be barred out by closing every door of communication with the external world, by excluding the atmosphere impregnated with death, surely overlooks the primary, proximate, and most formidable danger in his anxiety to provide against that which is secondary and more remote; while *he* who acts upon the principle, that although direct communication with others in whom it is rife, may accelerate its development, and increase its malignity; still it is also *self-originant*, a disease which

springs up as it were from the very ground of our evil hearts, and congenial with the atmosphere which we individually breathe—will surely be doubly watchful, “doubly armed.” He will be on his guard against evil, both from without and within. The bark that would convey the infection from abroad shall find with him no harbour; while the causes and the symptoms of internal corruption will all be sought out and obviated. Which ever theory be supposed to be true, or though both be true, still he will be safe. His creed secures him. His spiritual city will not be made desolate. He will be as completely “separate from sinners,” as though he were himself a saint, yet as watchful over *self* as though he were “*the chief of sinners.*” And thus, although depraved in nature, and living in a corrupt and corrupting world, by watchfulness, prayer, and Christian circumspection, through the grace of God he will be enabled to “live godly, righteously, and soberly in this present world,” “*perfecting holiness in the fear of God.*”

## CHAPTER V.

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### THE DEGREE OF DEPRAVITY.

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"The wickedness of man was great in the earth, and every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."

"From the sole of the foot, even unto the head, there is no soundness in it."

"For I know that in me, (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing."

"For the good that I would, I do not."

Thus far I will trust that the convictions of most of my readers have gone with me. Naturally and very greatly depraved we evidently are. This the Scripture declares, and experience verifies. Had men been content to stop here it had been well. The witness found in every breast, and the proofs glaring upon every eye, would almost have precluded opposition; leaving few to gain-say, and to these few no handle of objection.

It is the going beyond the warranty of Scripture, and the plain facts of the case, that has laid open the whole doctrine of depravity to reproach; and induced many to deny, in any degree, altogether, that which they could not admit to an

unlimited extent. The unauthorized assertion of that one specific, settling word, *total*, has probably done as much to prejudice men against even the *sober* statement of their depravity, as all the rank opposition of *sceptic minds* or *ungodly hearts*. My objections are to *the phraseology used*, rather than to *the doctrine really intended*.

The term *total* leads to misapprehension, expressing more than is intended to be expressed.

The term is *exclusive, superlative*; while the fact is held with *certain reserves, exceptions, and modifications*. To be consistent, either the doctrine should be avowed without qualification, or, if this may not be, the term should be restricted to the measure of the doctrine. Language loses all its precision, and ceases to be the just representative of thought, if the terms applied indicate either more or less than the mind intended. The question of *consistency* must be settled by those who use the term: their own *explanations and modifications*, however, relieve me from the necessity of combating at length *the doctrine of totality in corruption*: into the needless and fruitless controversy concerning which I have no desire to enter. A few of the inconsistencies which it involves may be mentioned in passing.

1. *Total depravity*, in strictness of speech, would be a perfectly hopeless and irremediable state. There would be left nothing to which a successful and saving appeal could be made;



nothing capable of responding to the voice of divine injunction; nothing of which the Spirit of God could take hold. Such, for aught that we know to the contrary, may be the state of the *fallen angels*; and this may account for the fact, that they are left without a remedy: *but such is not our case.*

2. It would equalize all offenders; since, notwithstanding the various gradations of *private and personal criminality*, if all were naturally *totally* depraved, they would be placed on one common level. And,

*Further*, It would merge the guilt of actual transgression altogether, since no actual sins could make men *more than totally depraved.*

*Once more*: The state of *total depravity* would equalize man with the very devils. Take away all possible good, and ascribe all possible evil, and you have a demon. The *same* process gives you *total depravity.*

Such being the inconsistencies involved in the idea of *total corruption* on the part of man, it is not surprising that both the term and the doctrine are unknown to Scripture. We may remark of all the sacred writers, (as has been well remarked of St. Paul,) that they "no where fix the *degree* of this corruption."\* They unite to pronounce it alarmingly great, but they no where assert its

\* Bishop Sumner.

**totality.** The determination of that point has been, it is conceived, by merely human authority.\*

\* In opposition to this many seemingly strong declarations of Scripture are often adduced, and among others the following one, already presented to the reader at the head of the present chapter—"For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing." Rom. vii. 18. The exact rendering here would be, "in my flesh good dwelleth not;" and this rendering is adopted by M'Knight. But waving this, the whole context is opposed to the doctrine of *totality*. The man is described throughout, as *discerning* and *approving good*. "To will is present with me"—"The good that I would"—"The evil that I would not." If, as some have supposed, the language is uttered by the apostle himself, as a renewed man, in behalf of all the renewed, it cannot bear at all upon the question; but if it refers to our nature generally, then these expressions are wholly inconsistent with the idea of *total depravity*. They prove, that in the inner man there is still left a witness for God; and, as the same Presbyterian divines last quoted has shown, (M'Knight in loco,) that God meant to convict the wicked, by appealing to the reason and conscience within them. He has throughout distinguished between "the *law of the mind* and the *law of the members*;" and if in the former there be even the approval and the desire after good, it rescues the man from the imputation of *total* corruption.

Another favourite testimony adduced is found in Gen. vi. 5. "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that *every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually*." This, however, has no bearing upon the point. It refers to the actually existing depravity of man, immediately antecedent to the general Deluge, when "all flesh had corrupted its way before God." It describes a state of unusual ripeness in transgression, and that visited by a special judgment, and not the invariable

Such are some of the objections which exist in the minds of many strong and consistent advocates of the doctrine of depravity to the use of the epithet *total*. It either intends not the doctrine which it seems to assert, or it asserts what is not literally true, and therefore *indefensible*.

Into the further discussion of the question it is not proposed to enter; my principal intention being to show how needlessly it is agitated, and how very closely those whom it seems to divide approximate in sentiment, when their respective views are clearly understood. The following testimonies from two of the ablest divines of the Presbyterian Church, whose names are extensively known on both sides of the Atlantic, may perhaps plead an apology with some for not going the whole length of their own assertions; and in presenting them to the attention of the reader, I would remark, that the moderate and unexcept-

state of man by nature. The language of Isaiah, (chap. i. 5, 6.) is often quoted. "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot, even unto the head, there is no soundness in it." &c. &c. This, however, is a description of the social wickedness and misery of the *Jewish nation at that particular time*, and not of the corruption of our nature in general. It would be easy to show, that the other declarations of Scripture usually quoted, are equally irrelevant; but these may be assumed as a specimen of the *class of texts* relied on, and their brief examination will confirm us in the belief, that Scripture is silent as to *totality* in *degree*, although it is express as to *universality in extension*.

tionable view which they present, is embraced by many of the most enlightened and able minds of all denominations esteemed orthodox, and that it is perhaps the only one which can place the truth of our depravity above dispute and above reproach, and send it, armed with the power of God, and speeded by the convictions of man, to the inmost recesses of the heart and conscience.

The late Dr. Dwight, in his sermon on the depravity of man and its degrees, remarks—1. “The human character is not depraved to the full extent of the human powers. It has been said, neither unfrequently nor by men void of understanding, that man is as depraved a being as his faculties will permit him to be. But it has been said *without consideration and without truth*. Neither the Scriptures nor experience warrant the assertion. The “young man” who came to Christ to know “what good thing he should do to have eternal life,” was certainly less depraved than his talents would have permitted him to be. Like him, we daily see many men who neither are, nor profess to be, *Christians*, and who, instead of being wicked to a degree commensurate to the extent of their faculties, go through life in the exercise of dispositions so sincere, just, and amiable, and in the performance of actions so upright and beneficent, as to secure a high degree of respect and affection from ourselves and from all others with whom they are connected. Those

who make the assertion against which I am contending will find themselves, if they will examine, rarely believing that their wives and children, though *not Christians*, are *fends*.

2. There are certain characteristics of human nature which, considered by themselves, are *innocent*.

3. Some of the natural characteristics are *amiable*. Such are natural affection, the simplicity and sweetness of disposition in children, often found also in persons of adult years—compassion, generosity, modesty, and what is sometimes called natural conscientiousness, that is, a fixed and strong sense of doing *that which is right*. These characteristics appear to have adorned the young man whom I have already mentioned. We know that they are amiable, because we are informed, that “Jesus, beholding him, loved him.”

In exact accordance with these observations, the celebrated Chalmers thus writes:—“Now there is a way of maintaining *the utter depravity of our nature, and of doing it in such a style of sweeping and vehement asseveration*, as to render it not merely obnoxious to *the taste*, but obnoxious to the understanding. On this subject there is often *a roundness and a temerity of announcement*, which any intelligent man, looking at the phenomena of human character with his own eyes, cannot go along with; and thus it is, that

there are injudicious defenders of orthodoxy, who have mustered against it not merely a positive dislike, but a positive strength of observation and argument." Again; "Let the nature of man be a ruin, as it certainly is. It is obvious to the most common discernment, that *it does not offer one unvaried and unalleviated mass of deformity.* There are certain phases and certain exhibitions of this nature which are more lovely than others—certain traits of character not due to the operation of Christianity at all, and yet calling forth our admiration and tenderness—certain varieties of moral complexion far more fair and far more engaging than certain other varieties; and to prove that the Gospel may have had no share in the formation of them, they, in fact, stood out to the notice and respect of the world, *before the Gospel was even heard of.*" Again; "The way then to assert the depravity of man, is to fasten on *the radical element* of depravity, and to show how deeply it is incorporated with his moral constitution. It is not by the utterance of *rash and sweeping totality*, to refuse him the possession of what is kind in sympathy, or of what is dignified in principle; for this were *in the face of all observation.* It is to charge him direct with utter disloyalty to God—it is to convict him of treason against the Majesty of heaven."

Not for a moment can it be supposed that these truly pious and scriptural writers were

desirous of explaining away the doctrine of depravity, or of weakening the practical sense of its malignity; but they doubtless felt, that it was "better to strike the mark than to go beyond it."\* They wished so to speak as to have a responsive echo from the conscience of every individual man, and they therefore used "the words of truth and soberness."

Their presentation of this humbling doctrine harmonizes with that given by the distinguished transatlantic prelate just quoted, and with the following expressions of our own prelates, of whom one seems to speak from *the grave*. "In his general character, man must be born again, must undergo a spiritual change, as a *fallen and corrupt creature*. *Not that all his powers and propensities are totally depraved*, for, on the contrary, all his powers and propensities, in their original destination and nature, are wise and good. The misdirection of them, and the excessive indulgence of them, in consequence of the fall, constitute man's depravity."†

"When we say, that 'man is very far gone from original righteousness,' we neither say nor mean, that any man on earth is as depraved and wicked as he possibly may be; or, in other words, that a man cannot live worse than he *does* live.

\* Bishop Sumner.

† Bishop Hobart's *Posthumous Works*, vol. ii. p. 63.

And when we say, that "the Scriptures have concluded all men under sin," or that "there is none that doeth good," it is not asserted, nor should it be understood, that all men are equally vicious."\*

While able minds of different communions thus harmoniously present the same guarded, sober, rational, scriptural view of our depravity, it would be well to see whether "the middle wall of partition" which has been needlessly raised between those who might and should have occupied common ground on the subject, may not be broken down;" and whether those "very friends," of the same doctrine, who have been separated by "curious questions" and mere quibblings, as to a point not definitely settled of God, may not be brought to identity of sentiment, or, at the least, to *a unity of feeling and the bond of peace*, by a clearer apprehension and more charitable construction of the sentiments mutually entertained.

The learned prelate already quoted has remarked, that "there would not probably be any real disagreement between those who yield to scriptural authority, if they would first examine and define the meaning they affix to the terms they employ."† Of this I am fully persuaded. Conversation with many of the most strenuous

\* Bishop Griswold's Sermons, ser. i. p. 14, 15.

† Bishop Sumner, Apostolic Preaching.



By no other mode can we drive the sceptic from his doubts, and the amiable moralist from his false dependances, and the worldling from his idols of earth and his indifference to God, and the Pelagian from his self-sufficiency, and the abandoned sinner from his sins, and bring them all unto Christ, with sorrow in their hearts, tears in their eyes, and the cry upon their lips, "*Lord, save us, or we perish.*"

*Parents, guardians!* instill this doctrine of innate depravity into the tender minds of your youthful charge. Let it be among "the elements, the first principles of the doctrine of Christ," which they imbibe. Show to them the proofs of it in their first risings of wrath and passion, in their daily little offences against each other, against you, against their Father in heaven, in the ease with which they learn "to do ill," and the difficulty with which they "learn to do well." Avoid the too common phraseology which addresses them as though they were good, or had the elements and means of good in their own constitution, and in their own power. Persuade them not to childish excellence, by flattering appeals to the pride or vanity of their little hearts. All these things lead them to false conclusions and dangerous results, and must, with much pains, be unlearned (if haply they can be unlearned,) in after years. Rather endeavour to convince them that they also were "born in sins," and are sinners by

practice, and consequently need both a Saviour and a Sanctifier. Stir them up to gratitude for having been "washed in the laver of regeneration:" and kindle within them, if possible, an anxiety for that "baptism of the Holy Ghost," which will make them *clean within*, "*clean every whit*." So shall you enshrine wholesome truth in the sanctuary of their hearts, give it a practical bearing upon the developement of childish character, the formation of youthful habit, and upon the best interests of "the life that now is," and of "that which is to come."

Yes, my readers, to all, we say, receive, profess, proclaim, and *improve* the doctrine of the natural depravity of the heart. But hold it in "truth and soberness." Let us take care to have facts and experience *with us*, rather than *against us*; and to adventure no further in assertion than *the warranty of Scripture will bear us out*. "The wisdom of God is wiser than men;" it were vain then to endeavour *to be "wise above what is written."* Human depravity, declared of God, exhibited and witnessed of man, *is a fact*. The degree of it is *a question*. To debate the question were profitless; to decide it, *difficult*, if not *impossible*. To believe and act upon *the fact*, is important to our present and *our eternal destiny*.

## CHAPTER VI.

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### THE EVIL HEART OF UNBELIEF.

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"For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness."

"Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief."

"So we see that they could not enter in, because of unbelief."

THERE is nothing, perhaps, from which the natural mind more revolts, or against which the natural heart more commonly rebels, than the appointment of FAITH, as the GREAT ESSENTIAL TO SALVATION. "It is a hard saying, who can bear it?" is the universal cry. That for the *simple fact of unbelief*, men should be excluded from the kingdom of heaven, is a regulation viewed at least with a suspicious and evil eye, if not actually regarded as an arbitrary act of legislation—a virtual assumption on the part of the Creator, and a direct infringement upon the liberty of the intelligent creature. Men delight to view *opinion*, like *property*, as absolutely and entirely *their own*, and at *their own disposal*; to be acquired and changed, *when*, and *as they list*; as a thing with which not *man* alone, but even *God* has no

right to interfere. Or else, if it be apprehended that this claim will not stand the test, they change their ground, and contend that opinion or faith is *not under their own control*; that it is a thing of circumstances—of contingencies—that its formation and peculiar character depend upon the original constitution of their minds—upon the bias of education—upon the nature of maturer and controlling associations—upon the manner in which even truth is presented to them; and that, from the diversity of these influencing and predisposing causes, it is impossible that any moral proposition, however certainly and universally true, should receive *universal assent*, and be alike acknowledged by minds differently constituted and disciplined; and, consequently, that *unbelief*, although it *may be their misfortune*, can *never be their guilt*. Miserable sophistry! It will require but a moment to expose its fallacy: and whether men “charge *God foolishly*,” as to the hardness of his requisitions, or whether they would screen *themselves* under the plea of inability, they are alike convicted at the bar of reason and of truth. What! had not God the *right* to be the teacher of his people on those subjects, which, of themselves, they cannot know? and to prescribe the terms on which he will receive them to his favour? and in the appointment of faith as necessary to salvation, has he done any thing more *than to exercise this right?*

Surely no intelligent man, in the ordinary use of his faculties, could think for a moment, either of denying *the right*, or of limiting its exercise; and the objection must therefore result from ignorance or misapprehension, as to our *original state*. They who are so jealous of God's dictation and of their own liberty, must forget that the two great attributes of our natural condition were **IGNORANCE and CONDEMNATION**.

1. *Our ignorance* becomes God's vindication from the charge of arbitrary enactment.

He only was able to reveal to us the things of heaven—the things concerning his own infinite essence and perfections—the things which would “make for our everlasting peace.” These things, by nature, we know not, and we could not know. Had they been discoverable by us, Revelation would have been superfluous, and faith would have been precluded. They would have been **matters of investigation and of positive knowledge, but not of faith**. That same state of man which required a revelation, and the same mercy of God by which it was imparted, left with *God* the right of demanding its acceptance, or else of affixing penalties to the act of rejection; and placed *us* under a moral obligation to its acceptance, or else a moral necessity to suffer those penalties.

2. *We were in a state of sin and condemnation*.

The sentence was upon us ; and its reversal rested with him who had pronounced it, not with us. If saved at all, it could only be through the free grace and mercy of God. If that grace and mercy be dispensed, it must be on his own terms. With him assuredly it rested to devise and appoint the *scheme or mode*, and the *conditions* of salvation. He has done so, and made them known to us in *the Gospel*. To refuse assent to his testimony, because the propositions revealed do not altogether square with our ideas or expectations, is to reject the whole system which they form—God's scheme for our salvation ; and as we have no *right to appoint terms for ourselves*, neither can *we bind God to their acceptance*, we lose the possibility of salvation. Our exclusion from heaven follows as a just and necessary sequence from our presumption and obstinacy.

And then, as to the plea of *inability to believe* : if not in every case falsely *pretended*, yet at the best it is but *imaginary*. What is the true state of the case ? In a department of knowledge which is the acknowledged province of Revelation, men subvert the legitimate empire of revealed truth, push forth their own reason, upon a course of investigation to which it is incompetent, give the reins to *imagination*, and bid it accompany and embolden reason in its flight through vast immensity—speculate boldly of earth, and hell, and heaven—rush to conclusions the very opposite

from those which God has established, and rest in them, and act upon them—and then, although the whole matter be of their *own wilfulness*, they still say that the *fault was not theirs*; that their unbelief is spontaneous, irresistible, and without sin! Well may we fear “that such an excuse will not be so easily accepted and allowed before God;” for it is not founded in truth. It is not the fact, that such men strive to believe and cannot. On the contrary, it may be fearlessly asserted, that they strive hard to *disbelieve*. Scepticism is their aim: and when they become accomplished professors of its cheerless theory of doubt and denial, so that they can scoff at all that is sacred here, and have ceased to hope for aught that may be hereafter, “*verily they have their reward.*”

Is exception still taken at God's declared indignation against this unbelief? Let it be stripped, then, of all its disguises, and appear in its true character, and its full deformity. To what does it amount, but to *an impeachment of the divine veracity*? Saith St. John, “He that believeth not God, **HATH MADE HIM A LIAR**, because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.” This is strong language, but not too strong for the truth. Its author was of too enlarged a charity, of too meek, loving, and catholic a spirit, to have slandered even an enemy. He would rather have whispered an excuse, or breathed a

prayer, than have pronounced a censure or proclaimed a judgment. The expression then has double weight, because coming from *his pen*. He declares the simple truth. Disguise it as we may, under the smooth and captivating terms of "harmless speculation," "thinking for self," "following reason," "following out principles," "going steadily to conclusions," "exercising mind," "exercising natural and moral liberty," "daring to be free," and unnumbered others, equally euphonous, equally fashionable, and equally false—still, this is UNBELIEF; when brought out from the covert of deceptive appellation, and called by its just name, and explained according to its real import. It is neither more nor less than *giving the lie to God*.

It may be well for those whom this strong language, and this to them new view of the subject, may have startled, to follow up the train of thought which the inspired St. John has opened; and to dwell for a little time upon his original presentation.

To refuse assent even to human testimony, when it is clear and credible, is an offence against reason and common sense; and if this refusal were common, the very foundations of opinion would be subverted, and the bonds of social confidence would be loosened. Hence, therefore, we all do receive, under ordinary circumstances, the direct testimony of those whom we imagine to *be honest*



**men.** Now saith our apostle, "If we receive the witness of man, the witness of God is greater." The inference from the comparison is this, that the rejection of *his* witness is as much more unreasonable and sinful, than the rejection of credible human testimony, as "the heavens are higher than the earth, or his ways than our ways."

Condemn man as justly or as loudly as you will, for not believing his fellow-men, and he still has this extenuation, *that they are his fellow-men*—"men of like passions" with others and with himself; that their senses may deceive them, or their prejudices warp them; that their motives may be unsound, and their aims unhallowed. But such extenuation finds no place, when God is the witness, and man the objector. From *his* very nature it follows, that the witness cannot err, and will not deceive. And the objector has not even the shadow of justification for his cavillings. He knows nothing, and therefore should say nothing. On the one side, there is infinite knowledge, infinite wisdom, infinite power, and infinite holiness. On the other, there is the profundity of ignorance, the liability to err, the weakness of dependence, and the pollution of sin. I leave it to you, my readers, to perceive and feel how the sin deepens in aggravation, when it is man, ignorant, erring, dependent, sinful man, who would "make *God* a liar;" the all-wise, infallible, self-existent, holy, omnipotent God!

Even *we*, frail and fallible though we are, scorn to have our word impugned, as though that word were essential truth. In the worldling's esteem, the questioning of his veracity is "the unpardonable sin," which can scarcely be washed out, even in the crimson stream of blood. And yet *we* deny what God has asserted; and put our miserable sophistries and pitiful objections in the scale against his revelations, yea, refuse to believe him on *his word and on his oath*,\* and expect that he will abide the blasphemous insult, and even admit the offender to his equal heaven! Surely this is presumption indeed!

It is not, however, *unbelief in the abstract*, but *unbelief in connexion with its consequences*, that offends and calls for punishment.

These consequences naturally, if not necessarily, lead to rejection. They that were travelling towards the earthly Canaan "could not enter in, *because of unbelief*." Why? Because that unbelief made them doubt God's own testimony to the value of that "good land" of promise—distrust his promised aid in its conquest and acquisition—magnify all the difficulties and obstacles in the way, while it caused their own courage to wane away, and their hearts to melt within them, because of fear; and a base and creeping servility of spirit to come over them; so that they thought

\* See Hebrews.

Egypt and its "iron bondage," the wilderness with its privations, its perils, and its terrors, better than God's own land, because that land could only be purchased by courage and exertion. And precisely such is the influence of unbelief upon men as travellers in the vast and dreary wilderness of earth, to a land of celestial rest. They *do not believe* what God has told them of "the rest which remaineth to his people." How then should they either desire or seek it? All holy and inspiring motive, all disposition and ability for saving effort is taken away. Their incredulity cramps their spiritual energies, represses all the aspirations after earthly excellence or future immortality, which ever and anon begin to arise within them—and it makes them low and grovelling; willing to creep along upon the polluted surface of this earth, and to batten upon the garbage of its food, and to drivel along until their death-doom arrives; and then to perish and be forgotten like the beasts of the field, and to mingle their dust with the dust to which their very souls have cleaved! Surely it must be, that *because of unbelief* men cannot enter into the heavenly Canaan.

And in this exclusion there is nothing arbitrary. It is the necessary result of the principle itself. "The door" indeed "is shut;" but it is unbelief which shuts it. He who does not believe in a God, will not serve God here, and cannot, therefore, .

consistently be supposed to go unto God hereafter. He who believes not in a Saviour, cuts himself off from all the soul-constraining motives of a Saviour's Gospel. He who has no settled conviction of the agency of a sanctifying Spirit, will probably "do despite to that Spirit," if he does not rush into the horrible impiety, the "unpardonable sin," of "blaspheming against the Holy Ghost."

The wonder, then, is not that the unbelieving are shut out from heaven; but the wonder would be, if they were *admitted* there. Strange indeed would be the translation, irreconcilable alike with the reputed character of God, and the expectations as well as capabilities of man, if, from utter godlessness, both in creed and practice, they should pass to that heaven which is filled with the glory of the triune Jehovah, where his will is supreme, and where the redeemed from earth, and the spirits of heaven, find their bliss in his service!

When unbelief becomes the distinguishing characteristick, the dominant sin of the soul, the apostle, with much propriety, terms it *the evil heart of unbelief*. Intellectual scepticism is sufficiently ruinous. It unsettles principles, it takes away motive, and leaves the poor doubter the sport of every wind of thought or passion, at the mercy of all temptations, the creature of ever-varying external circumstances or inward impulses. But spiritual unbelief, the unbelief of the

heart, is both more guilty and more fatal. Its sin is against light and against knowledge. The understanding is convinced, or, at the least, its decisions are not *against* the truth; but the *unbelieving heart* forms to itself a new decision; pushes away *the truth*, because it is hateful; embraces error, because it is pleasing; neglects the duties which "the finger of God" has written upon its own fleshly tablets, rushes into sin, because it loves sin, and acts as though it had said in its foolishness, "there is no God."

The distinction to which allusion has just been made between *intellectual scepticism* and the *unbelief of the heart*, is exceedingly important, although too generally forgotten or unknown. Popularly, it is in *every case* traced to *the head*. It is imagined that there is some natural obtuseness of mind, some strange obliquity in its views, resulting from its original conformation, or the warping influence to which it has been subjected in the process of training; and the whole of the difficulty and sin is, therefore, resolved into an *error of opinion*. The sceptic comforts himself with the thought, that as he cannot force himself to think *thus* or *thus*, he is consequently altogether *irresponsible* for sentiment. The world charitably pities rather than blames his error, and as charitably hopes that it will *be forgiven*. Christian friends, in their zeal to convert him to better views, direct all their efforts to the head; and hope,

by the force of reasoning, to *convince his understanding*; when, alas! the pride of understanding is at the root of his scepticism; and when, probably, the most ingenious reasonings, the most complete demonstrations of the truth, would only rouse that unholy pride to a more determined adherence to the doubting or infidel creed once professed.

The *seat* of the malady being thus mistaken, the *cure* fails as a matter of course. Year after year rolls by, leaving *friends* to wonder and to weep that he should be so obstinate; *infidel associates*, to laud and cherish him as a faithful brother, conviction proof; and *himself*, to exult in the boast, that no reasons strong enough for his conviction, have been offered to his acceptance. But what is the fact? What saith the Scripture? That there is in him "*an evil heart* of unbelief;" and that, "*with the heart*, he must believe unto righteousness." To be successful, anxious friendship and Christian solicitude, must change their mode of procedure. The heart must be addressed, moved, melted. If *this* once become right, the *mind* will find acquiescence most easy. Take away "the vail upon the heart," and "the scales" will soon "fall from the eyes." The mists of ignorance and error will be dissipated. He will see at first, perhaps obscurely, "men, as trees, walking," at last, distinctly, all things as they are, even "the wonderful things of God's law." The doubter, the unbeliever that was convinced, will

cry out, "My Lord and my God!" "In Christ's light he will see light." Such is the sure teaching of experience; and it coincides exactly with the assurance of HIM who is "THE TRUTH." "If a man will do my words, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God."

I would be far from asserting that there is no such thing as *mental scepticism*, distinct from the depraved and vitiated state of the *unbelieving heart*, or that the doubts of the mind are not to be resolved. There are some of a philosophical, or rather speculative turn of mind, who are ingenious in finding or fancying to themselves difficulties and objections; or who are forcibly struck by the objections which cunning infidelity is ever ready to spread at length before the curious eye, or to grouse together in close and formidable array. To such, I say, "Give a reason for" the faith and the "hope that are in us." It is right, that their difficulties, when stated, should be heard with patience, treated with deference, met with candour, and answered with fulness. Give them *evidence, full and complete evidence*; for this they have a right to demand, and with less than this they will not be satisfied. I consider not merely the conviction, but the *illumination* of the understanding, as important, in order to the full and kindly action of *the heart*, in matters of faith. The profession of belief, while many tantalizing doubts brooded over the mind, would be

sheer hypocrisy; and faith, without investigation, or in connexion with gross ignorance of the grounds of it, would be mere vulgar credulity. Still, in the vast majority of cases, it is confidently believed that the alleged contradiction and mental doubts on which so much stress is laid, are only the *ostensible* and *avowed*, not the *real* grounds of dissent from Christian truth, that they are the smallest items in the account, very "drops in the bucket;" and that though these should be met and removed a thousand times, yet would not conviction, or the acknowledgment of conviction, ensue, until *the heart* was turned to the love and search of the truth. As to any influence in making sin-loving men, who patronize latitudinarianism in *creed*, because it opens to them a perfect latitudinarianism in *morals*, *good Christians*, not all the evidences in the world would do this. There is truth and force in what an eminent and still living transatlantic writer\* has said on this subject; "I more than fear the prevailing taste for books of natural theology, physico-theology, demonstrations of God from nature, evidences of Christianity, &c. Evidences of Christianity? I am weary of the word. Make a man feel his want of it; rouse him if you can, to the self-knowledge of his need of it, and you may safely trust it to its *own evidences*." Evidences and proofs have their

\* Coleridge's *Aids to Reflection*, p. 245, Burlington edit.



value, when properly used by the proper subjects; but there are few indeed of the flippant objectors of this world who need them. Facts attest this. In their conviction and conversion, whensoever, and howsoever these occur, it is found universally, that the heart, with its affections, is the medium of influence. It is not a dry argument addressed to the mind, but the living, breathing, constraining force of truth upon *the soul*, that brings them into "the obedience of Christ." In the whole process of their change, their former and oft-vaunted objections have not only been left unresolved, but perhaps have neither been mentioned to others, nor occurred to themselves. Without human effort, "like the morning cloud or the early dew," they have passed away, under the warmth of the true light that hath shined around and within them. Without one speculative disputation, the providence or the grace of God have done the work. The bed of sickness, the stroke of adversity, the anguish of bereavement, the "still small voice of conscience," or of the spirit of God, the "word in season" making its way direct to the heart; one, or all of these have put to flight for ever their crude conceits and puny sophistries. Struck, as it were, to the earth, by the force of moral conviction, you hear no more of *defective evidence*. There is an end at once to sly insinuation or open blasphemy against the truth, to malice and unkindness "breathed forth" against

its disciples. They ask not for arguments and syllogisms, for they have *demonstration*, the *demonstration of feeling* God's own witness within them. Their cry is not, *how* shall we believe? but, "Lord, what wilt thou have us to do?" The "evil heart of unbelief" having at length been changed, the mind also is at rest, and all is well with them.

The *insidiousness* of this evil unbelief in the heart must not be passed unnoticed. It is often latent where it is little suspected. The apostle, therefore, gives the appropriate caution, "*take heed*, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief." It might be deemed unkind and ungenerous, to express the fear that Christians were not Christians, that believers by profession were unbelievers in point of fact. Yet precisely to that amounts the apostle's language, and such is the unwilling judgment which in many cases we are constrained to form. There are many things connected with religion, most dangerously taken for granted; none more commonly than the *existence* and the *proper character of faith*. The heart, "deceitful above all things," easily persuades itself that it receives and acknowledges the written law of Christ, and never stops to inquire whether its emotions and promptings are not in opposition to the letter as well as the spirit of that law. Among thousands who raise not an objection nor breathe a whisper against the Gospel, some

having assumed its truth without examination, and others having assented to it after laborious disquisition, we still discover the evidences of *unbelief* in the disposition or desire to depart from the living God, in an unwillingness to acknowledge and respect his authority, in the distrust of his providence, in a murmuring against his dispensations, which could not exist if the heart so believed as to feel. It is a sad thing, and yet as common as it is sad, to have the understanding speculatively satisfied with proofs, while the heart has no share in any one fact that is proved, while it burns with no spiritual love, receives no Saviour, welcomes no Sanctifier, looks for no futurity, anticipates no heaven, and dreads no hell; yea, is as cold and dead as though these were but names and fables! How many, then, give evidence of this heart of unbelief, whose creed is the creed of the Church of God, the very "faith once delivered to the saints!" Let all who have a serious concern for their soul's salvation look well to the matter, and "examine themselves, whether they be in the faith."

To a certain extent, "this unruly evil, full of deadly poison," is represented as under the control of man. We are to "take heed that it be not in us." There is a personal care to be exercised by each individual over his own soul. To God indeed it appertains to give and to preserve the spirit of faith. But his agency is exerted

through our instrumentality. His never closing eye watches with those who watch for themselves. His effectual aid strives with those who are working out their own salvation. We can conceive, on the part of the wicked, of a course of thought and action, which shall plunge them into the lowest depths of error and corruption, where they will be shut out from every ray of light and truth, and whence it shall be morally impossible for them to rise again. And we may, on the other hand, imagine to ourselves a holy prudence, a determinate purpose in the righteous, which will nerve to that powerful grasp of faith, that will never relax its hold upon life.

To this ripeness of the faith, however, the careless and the unguarded can never come. It is the heritage of those only who have made "a covenant with their eyes," and "set a watch before the door of their lips." Unbelief is secretly introduced, but it is rapidly developed and matured. "While men sleep" "the enemy" soweth it. Like Jonah's gourd, it "cometh up in a night;" but, alas! not like it, to wither in the morning sun. In reference to it, well then may we hear and apply the warning of our Lord, "what I say unto you, I say unto all, *Watch.*"

Would to God, that before taking leave of this subject, I could awaken the reader to a just estimate of the guilt and danger of this all-pervading principle; this "sin which doth so easily beset

us." It is the worm that lieth at the root of all excellence: it is the canker that destroys all that is fair and lovely in hope. The first sin that stained and cursed the earth, came through unbelief. It was thought, that "God had said, but would not do it; that he had spoken, but would not make it good." And it is not extravagant to suppose, that it will be the last sin which will insult the Majesty of heaven, and be charged in the long catalogue of human crime. My reader! in the day when "the books shall be opened," may it not be found charged against us, for he against whom it is written, "shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him" for ever.

## CHAPTER VII.

## THE DIVIDED HEART.

- " Their heart is divided; now shall they be found faulty."  
 " Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart."  
 " My son, give me thine heart."  
 " He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not  
 worthy of me."

**HUMAN** language, in its general structure, is highly figurative, and some of its boldest figures occur in the use of *epithets*. These, from their secondary and merely adjunctive character, avoid all suspicion of figure; and yet they involve some of the most spirited and most striking tropes to be found in the whole compass of language. In regard to mind and spirit, to mental and moral affections, the foundation of them all will be found in *the ascription to these, of attributes belonging only to matter*. Thus the epithets applied to the *spiritual* heart, all refer primarily to the *natural* or *fleshy* heart, and wonderfully does the *material* here illustrate the *immaterial* part. A **DIVIDED HEART**, is no uncommon expression. Its ordinary import is as well understood as its use is familiar.

Yet few analyze the expression, or consider its strength. Let us, then, trace it to its origin. Let us apply it, in the strictness of the letter, to the natural heart. Imagine *that heart* to be *divided*, severed, or rent in twain! What would either part be worth in the physical economy? Would it carry on the process of circulation? Could it even preserve the animal vitality? Would it be at all better to the man than if he had *no heart*? The answer to these questions is obvious; and the inference comes with force to the mind, of the utter worthlessness of a *divided spiritual heart* in the *spiritual* economy—of *half a heart* presented unto God; and we are, therefore, ready to admit, that *when* the heart is thus divided, men *must* be “found faulty.” We see the reasonableness of the injunction, “My son, *give me thy heart*”—*thy whole heart*; and we are at no loss to discover why it should be the great commandment of the law, that we should “love the Lord our God with all our mind, and all our strength, and *all our soul*.”

The writer was in momentary doubt, as to the place in the work which this chapter of right should occupy. As the heart that has not been at all given unto God, but is unreservedly given to the world and to sin, cannot with propriety be said to be *divided*, the state contemplated must therefore belong either to the partially convinced, the almost Christian, or to the too worldly and

almost back-sliding believer. The phrase itself argues some degree of grace in the soul; either grace partially triumphant, struggling against still unconquered worldliness, or grace once dominant, but now on the wane, and in danger of defeat and expulsion. The state intended may perhaps be justly regarded as an *unchristian state* of the *otherwise Christian soul*. Its "faultiness" and dangerous tendency, therefore, fix its appropriate location *here*, rather than among the gracious states of the *renewed heart*.

It might at first be imagined, that of very necessity the heart must be divided—that it cannot be single and entire unto God. Yet he has thus challenged it to himself: and as he never demands impossibilities, it becomes us to ascertain what constitutes *the divided heart*; so that we may reconcile, if possible, *the entire dedication of the heart to God*, with the full play and exercise of the social affections.

This is the more important, because, on the one hand, some who profess to be Christians, from an imperfect apprehension of the exclusiveness of their spiritual dedication, "keep back a part" of that which rightly belongs unto God: while others again, whose love to him is pure and ardent, needlessly distress themselves, lest their human affections, heaven-implanted, pure, well regulated, hallowed, as they are, should conflict with the claims of God.



The first point to be decided is, *what constitutes that supreme love to God which he has challenged to himself, and how far this is exclusive of all other affections.* The language of Scripture is seemingly express. Thou *shalt love* the Lord thy God with *all thine heart.* This seems all engrossing—leaving no portion of the affections, or share of their exercise, for any other objects either in earth or heaven. And yet we dare not interpret the precept in this latitude, or carry it out practically in this full extent. There are qualifications of its meaning which are given of God himself, and to these we are bound to have respect. These qualifications are to be inferred from the tendencies of nature, and with greater certainty from the book of inspiration. We are so constituted as to become strongly attached even to localities; for example, to the spot of our birth, and the place of our early and most touching associations, and to objects of fortuitous or habitual familiar intercourse. There are within us a vast number of latent sympathies, which would be latent for ever, or perish undeveloped, unless elicited by correspondent objects of human attraction and regard. As these sympathies evidently belong to the healthy action of the soul, and are not the result of the moral derangement consequent upon the fall, the very fact of their existence points us as though with the finger of God, to their *exercise.* The inference is neither

*dark nor dubious.* It is one which is immediately and universally drawn. In the various affinities of social feeling, in the law of attraction which draws and binds man to his fellow-man, we recognize God's law of indirect but clear permission; a law, weakened by no counter tendencies, and repealed by no express declarations. Nature feels that the warranty is sufficient, and conscience gives to it its ready sanction, and bids us, without one misgiving, act it out in the life. In some cases this law of natural affection carries with itself a coercive, a resistless force. It compels to obedience. Take, as an illustration, the love of the mother to her offspring. Triumphant over hunger and thirst, suffering and danger, the desire of life and the fear of death, it may well be said to be *stronger than death*. In the other relations of life, according to their respective degrees of closeness, the impulse is proportionably strong; and the implied sanction of God, therefore equally evident. But we have *express* sanction—the sanction of his *written word*. There is *positive command*; even “line upon line, and precept upon precept.” The voice of God condescends to speak to us of all the subdivisions of human regard. His eye looks upon us, not only in our *individual capacity*, but as we are grouped together in *families*; and, independently of general philanthropy, he enjoins that special mutual love which is the only, but powerful cement of family

union. The duties of parents to their children, and children to their parents, of the husband to the wife, and the wife to the husband, are specified with perfect distinctness, and the most affecting tenderness. And it is worthy of remark, and altogether definite in the case, that "the *first great* commandment of the law," which enjoins the love of God with *the whole heart*; is immediately followed by the kindred precept—"a second; which is like unto it"—"thou shalt *love thy neighbour as thyself*;" while it is emphatically declared, that "on these two commandments," closely allied in character and spirit, and differing only in their objects, "hang all the law and the prophets." Most clearly is it shown, that these two great branches of human duty and affection spring from the same source; that they are only different exhibitions of one and the same great principle: the love of the *creature* being the effect, and the test of love to *the Creator*; for it is written, "this commandment have we received, that he who love *God*, love *his brother* also: for if any man love not his brother, whom he hath seen, how shall he love God, whom he hath not seen?" It is one of the scriptural marks of the unrenewed man in his worst state, that he is "*without natural affection*." Unless, therefore, we suppose God to be a self-contradictory Being, who has enjoined mutually inconsistent duties, and who has appointed rivals to himself, the pure and

hallowed love of our relatives and brethren upon earth, cannot be at variance with the *required devotion* of the heart unto him.

A powerful confirmation of this view, so congenial with the teachings and the feelings of nature, is found in the fact, that the Son of God, whose perfect love to his Father in heaven, and entire conformity to his will, are not for a moment to be doubted, was pre-eminently distinguished for the strength of his human affections, and for their free and unrestrained exercise. It is impossible to read the narrative of his painful sacrifices and willing labours, "for us men, and our salvation," and not feel that "even while we were yet enemies, he loved us." Besides this general benevolence, his private attachments were ardent and unwavering. The family of Bethany was peculiarly dear to him. "He loved Lazarus, and Martha, and Mary." In *regard to the first*, when he had been stricken of God, the irrepressible tokens of his grief constrained even the Jews to exclaim, "Behold, how he loved him!" "He groaned in spirit, and was troubled." "JESUS WEPT." None can read his parting address to his disciples shortly before his crucifixion, and his last sacerdotal prayer in their behalf, and not feel that he spake truly when he said, "I have chosen you, and loved you;" yea, that "having loved his own, he loved them unto the end." Even amidst his last agonies,

he forgot not the mother, who poured forth the feelings of a mother's heart at the foot of the cross. "Woman, behold thy Son : Son, behold thy mother." "The disciple whom he" especially "loved," was imbued with the same spirit. He was emphatically *a man of love, the preacher of love*. It is breathed forth from his every page—it seems to have indited his every word. It was indeed his "ruling passion, strong in death." Few of my readers, it is presumed, can be ignorant of the touching anecdote recorded of him, that when the infirmities of age prevented the active discharge of his ministerial function, and when his tottering limbs could no longer bear him unassisted to the house of God, he was wont to be led thither, and Sabbath after Sabbath to repeat the unvarying exhortation, "little children, love one another"—a brief but a pertinent and most impressive sermon. And in every subsequent age we may confidently assert, that the most eminently pious servants of God, the most devoted followers of the Lamb, have ever been conspicuous for friendships closer than brotherhood—for an intensity of feeling in the dearer and sweeter relationships of life.

From facts like these the deduction is clear, that the highest degree of legitimate earthly affection is by no means necessarily connected with that "divided heart," which is ever "faulty" before God.

A further illustration of the idea, that the indulgence of these earthly affections will not be viewed with jealousy, even by HIM who is "a jealous God," may be drawn from the *feelings of men in regard to the sharing of affection with other collateral objects of regard*. Even in that most close, that most tender intercourse of the heart, where rivalry is the least brooked, and where an exchange of hearts is demanded and boasted, the affection which is due to the other kindred relations of life, is by no means proscribed. The devoted lover, who of all men comes nearest to the idolater, is not chagrined that the almost deified object of his affections should cherish, with all filial tenderness, the authors of her being. He is content that she should impart her feelings and her confidence to the friend or the sister of her heart; nor does one unkindly thought arise, though she should again and again be folded to a brother's bosom, and receive the pure kiss of affection, warm from a brother's lips. Nay, so far from exciting the jealousy of a naturally jealous heart, from all these things there arises rather the confident expectation of correspondent fidelity and tenderness in the highest and holiest connexion of life. And when that connexion has been formed, when the unalterable vow has been reciprocally made and sealed, and he is permitted to call the being on whom he had doated *all his own*, the sweetness of connubial felicity is not marred, nor

is there need to administer the *bitter and searching water of jealousy*, because the heart which beats fondly for him, beats also for others; because that house of which he is the acknowledged lord, has a place also for acquaintances and friends, for brethren and sisters, for father and mother. The reason is obvious. There is *no rivalry involved*: and it is only *rivalship* in affection which causes the heart to be *offensively divided*. Reasoning from analogy then, we conclude that as *the relation* in which we stand to God is entirely different from that which we sustain *towards men*, the *feelings* which respectively belong to these relations, do not come into mutual collision—that there is one class of affections which finds its objects among men here upon earth, and another class which must seek them in “the heaven of heavens,” at the throne of God—and that we shall not be unfitted for “rendering unto God the things which are God’s,” because we also “render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar’s.”

It is in our spiritual as it is in our bodily organization: the capability for action is elicited or developed by the necessity for action. As the female breast distends not with the pure stream of infant nourishment until there is a demand for this first aliment of infant life, even so, every new relation of life opens a new fountain of love: and in the great reservoir of the heart, fed as it is by

deep and perennial springs, there is an abundant supply for them all. All these different channels of affection run in parallel directions. They do not indeed unite and coalesce, nor do they at all diminish or drain each other: and it is probably by no means extravagant to assert, that each is fullest and strongest when all are filled to the full. He who has no drafts upon his affections will at last lose the power of loving others. He will degenerate into a poor pitiable lover, yea, idolater of *self*; while he, whose affections are the most frequently and most freely drawn upon, will have them always replenished and always fresh. The fullest flow then of the social affections, in their legitimate earthly channels, will have no tendency to prevent spiritual affection from rising as high as its original source, the primary source of all life and love. Nay, human love will be the handmaid to sacred love. It will assist the soul in its elevation to its God. The more we love those whom he has given to be with us here, the more shall we love him, the God and Father of all, for having made them our companions and comforters during the weary pilgrimage of life. All those loved ones to whom the heart so strongly clings with all its fibres and tendrils—friends, relatives, parents, children, partners, become so many links in the chain that binds us to our God: and it may be confidently asserted, that under ordinary circumstances, the



its Judge, "to serve God and mammon;" and, above all, should he "love the praise of men more than the praise of God," *his heart* will be *sinfully divided*.

The practical duties of life to friends and relatives, are usually perfectly plain and obvious. On the contrary, calls to *the extraordinary service of God*, which must ever come to us through the medium of *inward feeling and persuasion*, in *connexion with providential dispensations*, are attended with some ambiguity, and always open to the possibility of mistake. This should ever be borne in mind, when the balance is to be nicely struck between opposite duties which seem nearly in equipoise, and especially when a decision is to be made between inward promptings, or what is termed an *inward call*, and human obligations or commands. Still, making all due allowance for the uncertainty in the one case, and the comparative clearness in the other, and giving all due weight to the acknowledged claims of man, let us take care that the summary process of giving an immediate preference of "the things which are seen" and "temporal," over those "which are not seen" and "eternal"—of the requests and pleading of human affections over the marked indications of the Divine will; or lest the habit of "setting the one against the other," and thus causing them to exercise a reciprocally neutralizing influence, do not make us recreant

to spiritual duty, or cowardly recusants of the calls of God, and thus cause that *divided state* of the affections which is so entirely faulty in the sight of God.

Assuredly we believe that there is such a thing as being *specially called of God*; "*inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost*." At the threshold of the Christian ministry, the candidate is solemnly asked if "he trusts that he is inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost to take upon him this office and ministration?" and an affirmative reply is necessary to his reception of "the imposition of hands." The *question* proposed at this solemn hour must be something more than an idle ceremonial; and the answer must be supposed to be given in all "godly sincerity," or it would be a deliberate "lying unto the Holy Ghost." Why then may we not suppose the Holy Spirit to influence or move, as to the ministry in general, so to the special nature and sphere of ministration in particular? Instances of this special monition are on record; as for example, when Philip was bidden of the Spirit "to go and join himself to the chariot" of the nobleman of Ethiopia. When, again, the Holy Ghost said, "separate me Barnabas and Saul, to the work whereunto I have called them;" that is, to a *special mission among the Gentiles*. And, once more, when Paul, in vision, having seen "a man of Macedonia, who prayed him, and said, Come over into Macedonia and help us."

assuredly gathered that the Lord had called him to preach the Gospel unto them. Now, in our case, miracles having ceased, and special revelations being no longer vouchsafed, this special call or designation of the Spirit would have to be gathered from the ordinary sources of human judgment. It might be inferred, with reasonable certainty, from a persuasion entertained, or a conviction impressed upon the mind, too deeply, and too abiding in duration, to be resolved into a passing whim or caprice, or into the influence of an excited imagination. Admitting this evidence to be afforded to the perfect satisfaction of the individual himself, and all his feelings to be enlisted on the side of obedience to what he deemed the heavenly monition, he would be convicted of *loving friends more than Christ*, if, while the conviction of duty remained clear and strong, the duty itself was neglected; if, like the prophetic messenger to guilty Nineveh, he should decline the commission, and endeavour "to flee from the presence of the Lord." *He*, who with a longing and a burning desire to become a herald of salvation, or being such, to take the missionary standard in his hand, and to plant it upon "the high places" of Heathen abomination, should suffer the clinging of his heart to its much loved earthly home, or the entreaties of earthly relatives, to deter him from a work to which he was evidently pointed by the spirit of God—he would present a marked and melan-

choly instance of the *heart unworthily divided*, through *the force of natural affection*. The love of self and of friends, would be stronger than the love of Christ and of souls; and this *would be his sin*. Let those who are called of God, who are "pressed in spirit," "bound in spirit," beware!

Nor would these friends be held excused, if from desires for his worldly advancement, and an unwillingness to sacrifice the comfort of personal communion with him, they should refuse to let him go at the bidding of his God, instead of saying with a pious mother of old, "As long as he lives he shall be lent unto the Lord." In either of these cases, the selfishness of private feelings triumphs over Christian impulse, prevents Christian heroism, and even destroys Christian conscientiousness. The *guilt* of THE DIVIDED HEART is there—and its legitimate consequences are found in disappointed hopes, conscious shame, vain regrets, bitter self-reproaches, sickly and languid efforts to do good in another sphere and other modes, and a quiet, speedy sinking into listless indifference and drivelling mediocrity.

2. If we would not that family and friends should offensively divide our hearts with God, *his mercy and his hand must be recognised in their bestowal*.

He is their Creator, he their Preserver. If they have a form that is symmetric to the eye, a

countenance radiant with beauty, whose expression ever speaks directly to the heart—if they have minds of rare intelligence, and affections of uncommon force and depth—if they have gifts and graces that attract the admiration of others, and make them the very joy of our hearts, then be these hearts sedulously guarded against a foolish and a guilty pride; and let us take heed that we do not spend upon *the work* of Omnipotence, feelings and regards that should pass to the Almighty *Workman*. If it “were an iniquity to be punished by the judge,” should “the heart be secretly enticed” to idolatry, in beholding “the sun when it shineth, or the moon walking in brightness,” not less so would it be, to rest in adoring love of a creature of earth, forgetful of HIM who is “the framer of its body and the father of its spirit.” It is right that the heart should rejoice in those with whom it takes its holiest earthly communings; but the joy must be mingled with gratitude to him “from whom cometh every good and perfect gift.” This only can redeem it from sin, and make it accordant with the state in which we are placed, and with the spirit of our Christian calling.

But, 3. If the divided heart is to be avoided, *friends must be loved and cherished, not as ours by any independent right, but under a practical recognition of God's unquestionable right to recall them when he will.*

He *does* resume them when he will; and neither reluctance, nor murmurings, nor efforts on our part, can retain them in opposition to his Almighty fiat. "No man hath power to retain the spirit in the day of death, and there is no discharge in that war." We are placed then under an enforced necessity of acquiescence with God's dispensations; but this, it is evident, has in it nothing of the character of a Christian grace; and may co-exist with a secret though fruitless rebellion against his will and allotments. The Christian who would avoid all sinful conflict between human and divine affections, between God's just claims and his own imaginary claims, must yield that submission from *principle*, to which others are constrained by *necessity*. He must bow his heart and his head before the stroke which removes the treasures of his soul; and as he sits in "the dust and ashes" of his affliction, he must still say, "it is the Lord, let him do what seemeth unto him good." Sorrow he may, sorrow he must; for so God hath ordained, so his nature is constituted. Weep he may; for it is his privilege, his comfort, his relief. Tears are the overflowings of the waters of bitterness: without which the heart to which they were confined would burst. Yet *murmur*, he *must not*. To him, "from whom the whole family in earth and heaven is named," he must leave it to decide, where his loved ones shall exist; whether here on

earth, or in the world of spirits ; and amidst all the ruins of his hopes, and the bitterness of his griefs, the persuasion must come, strongly and soothingly to his mind, that "THE JUDGE OF ALL THE EARTH WILL DO RIGHT."

These, my readers, are no cold and abstract speculations on *the theory* of submission, independently of *its application*. Perhaps it may draw the cords of sympathy more closely, and give an associated interest to his present remarks, if the writer admits you for a moment to the privacy of his home and of his heart; and shows to you, that the yoke which he would impose upon others has but recently been borne by himself.

By a singular coincidence of circumstances, he had but just reached this part of his subject when the joy of his house was darkened, and his spirit bowed down by the pressure of affliction. The blight came suddenly over a tender bud of beauty and promise; it withered, fell from the stem, and was given to the dust of the earth. The smile that was as the sunshine gleam to a parent's heart, cheers him no more; the voice, that in tones of silvery softness was wont to lisp his name, is hushed in death; the infant loveliness that was the delight of his eye, is hidden in the dark and narrow grave; a bereaved mother sits sadly in her sorrow, and knows not how "to be comforted," because this loved one of her heart, this nursling of her bosom, "is not"—and now, the earth com-

mitted to its kindred earth, the "spirit returned to God who gave it,"—the busy bustling in "the house of mourning," which wounds yet beguiles the troubled spirit, having given place to the cheerless desolation of a house which the spoiler hath robbed—the pen resumes its interrupted work, and guided by a trembling hand, feelingly records what the heart practically admits, that the comforts and the comforters which we have here, are but loans from our God, to be returned when he demands; that whether he "gives" or "takes away," it alike becomes us to "bless the name of the Lord,"—that our hearts must prompt and our lips utter, that meek declaration of our Lord, "The cup which my Father hath given me to drink, shall I not drink it?" Thus, my readers, in all cases, let us humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, and then, although our love begin with the beginnings of life, and survive the death of its objects, and linger around their grave, yet the *heart* shall not be *divided*, nor shall *sin* be added unto sorrow.

These are the only restrictions which it is necessary to impose upon the exercise of human affections. Only be willing, if called of God, to dedicate yourselves, or to give up those who are dear to you, to his service—hold them, while they are spared, as blessings from *his* hand—*sorrowfully* if it must be, yet *meekly* at the least, resign them at *his* summons, and then, however intense



be the ardour of your affection, your heart will still be single, and sin will not be imputed.

It has already been shown, that human objects of regard but rarely usurp the throne and the sceptre of God in the heart. Not from *them*, therefore, is ordinarily the danger of a faulty division of its affections. No, not from *them*; but I will tell you what you shall “rather fear;” the “idols,” other than those of flesh and blood, which “you have set up, each one in his heart”—the “lust of the eye, and the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life”—those varied objects of attraction, defying specification, which may all be classed under the one broad expression, “the lusts of other things”—that *ambition* which makes “the crown of life,” “the kingdom of heaven,” as nothing in comparison with a crown and a kingdom, rank and honour, power and consequence, *here on earth*—that inordinate *thirst after pleasure*, which soon causes men to become “lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God”—that *greediness after gain*, which, while it seeks, Midas like, to convert all that it touches into gold, causes the fine gold of Christian piety to become dim, and its pure gold to become dross—it is the master sin or sins, whatever be their nature, whether of “the flesh or of the Spirit”—yes, it is these which you must fear; for these may so divide the heart, as at the last to become instrumental in “*casting both soul and body into hell.*”

This faulty division of the heart can scarcely be supposed to be difficult of detection. If our human love had been turned from any of its wonted channels—if the allegiance of the heart to the object of its plighted and wedded love, had been forsworn—if the parent had banished, if not from his home, at least from his heart, the child whom he once loved as his own soul—if “the milk of human kindness” had been turned into “gall and bitterness”—in all these cases, it would be almost impossible for the heart to remain ignorant of the change in its own affections. Thus also, in regard to our devotedness to God. Even in the forming stage of Christian character, when men are but newly brought under the influence of religious principle, when they are but going unto Christ, and have a full profession in close prospect as an object of hope and desire, if there be any one object which acts as a special drawback in their course, or any unsubdued worldliness clinging around the heart, and preventing its free and willing self-dedication, there will be either a shrewd suspicion or a secret conviction in the mind, of the *true cause* of the reluctance; although the deceitfulness of the heart may in some cases shroud it under the cloak of mental difficulty, pious scruple, a solemn and overawing sense of responsibility, and an earnest desire for very thorough and complete preparation. But in the renewed and already professing Christian, this

state will be more easily discovered. It is impossible that *he* should have "lost his first love," and cease to do his "first works," without having some strong intimations from *within*, and some clear evidences flashing upon his mind from *without*, to rouse him to a perception of the change. A more frequent intrusion of worldly and wandering thoughts—less frequent and less reverential thoughts of God—less tender and less affecting views of the Saviour—a less immediate dependence upon the Spirit—diminished delight in sacred meditation—indifference or disinclination to religious exercises public or private, and greater distraction of mind while engaged in them—a secret repugnance to sacramental participation, or a constrained, formal mechanical communing—a sensible loss of spiritual comfort, and a discharge of spiritual duties, as though they were toil and task-work—these are symptoms not to be mistaken, which would induce any candid and conscientious examinant of self to say, "Now is my heart divided, now shall I be found faulty."

The particular cause of division, the special object which disputes the heart with God, may be ascertained by noting the prevailing bent or direction of the thoughts and affections. Physicians have not unfrequently inferred the true cause of mental and even bodily disease, by attentively watching the pulse of the patient when different suspected causes were brought into ope-

ration; and he who will be at the pains to feel the spiritual pulse, will readily ascertain the relative degrees of influence of different exciting objects, and which of these objects engrosses to itself what belongs to God. As the needle to the pole, so will the heart point to its master passion. Let a man attend to *his thoughts*, and note the object with which they are most usually connected; let him ascertain what it is that most attracts to itself his affections, and sways his conduct; what is the image that follows him to his nightly pillow, and is last and longest distinct amidst the dimness and confusion of waning consciousness, and gives the colouring to his dreams, and is present to his mind when it awakes in renovated freshness, and enters into the busy schemes of the busy day. *This is his idol—the rival of his God.*

*The cause being known, what shall be the remedy?*

Like all the other converting and restorative processes of religion, it is natural, simple, and appropriate. It will strike at the very root of the evil. It will aim at the total expulsion, or at least at the complete subjugation, of the rival object. Temporising expedients will rarely avail much, particularly if the idolatry of the heart, through long continuance, have become rank. It will not be enough that the idol be removed from its niche, or from its pedestal; it must be entirely removed from the heart, that is “the temple of the Holy

Ghost," "an habitation of God through the Spirit;" yea, it must be broken utterly in pieces, and, like the golden calf in Horeb, ground as fine as the dust of the earth, and scattered to the winds of heaven, or mingled with the deep waters of oblivion. Or, to speak without a figure, the Christian will break at once from any attachment which tends to wean him from his God. He will be careful to break the habits, and cease from the engagements which gave and maintained its ascendancy. However necessary to his personal comfort it may have been rendered through weakness or habit, he will sacrifice it at once to his high and imperative sense of Christian obligation. He will give himself anew, with fresh devotedness, to the duties and enjoyments of his religious days. By meditation and prayer, he will endeavour to rekindle the extinguished torch of spiritual affection, unite again the severed chain of spiritual association, and bind himself more firmly than ever to the service of his God, to the hopes of heaven. Under the influence of this revived and more powerful attraction, with a single aim in view, and an unimpeded course before him, he will go direct to the goal, and his hands will lay hold upon the prize.

I need scarcely remind my readers of the great importance of keeping the heart single towards God. Whoever has been for a time the sport of conflicting sentiments or feelings, will remember

how much under such circumstances he suffered, and how little he achieved. The opposite attractions of the heart are the cause of pain, without the hope of advantage. The opposite elements of feeling neutralize each other. When the effervescence has subsided, he whom it has sorely agitated, finds that if the evil has lost some of its virulence, the good has also been impaired in its energy, and become negative in its character. Well said the Saviour, "No man can serve two masters." "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." The experiment has been often made, but never with satisfaction, and never with success. As well might men attempt to mingle the light and the darkness. Pitiable is *his* state, and tortuous is *his* course, who has too much worldliness to love God supremely and to serve him singly, and still too much religiousness to be happy in the neglect of God. He will be "unstable in all his ways," and at peace neither with himself nor his God.

There is one consideration which should induce us to aim at keeping "the eye single, that the whole body may be full of light," the heart undivided, that it be not found faulty—and that is, the unworthy state of the heart even at the best, and the worthlessness of our most holy services. Our power of concentration, whether of thought or feeling, is exceedingly limited; and when we have endeavoured to bring the divergent rays of mind most completely to their focus, and to give them

the most burning power, and to throw all the energy of body and of soul into our Master's work, still, how little do we accomplish! And shall we not then "do our diligence to give" *all* "of that little?" Shall we abstract a single mite from so poor and pitiful a tribute? To give less than all that we have, and all that we are, is it not "robbery of God?"

After our best strivings we shall have reason to lament the frittering away of spiritual energies by division and subdivision among many objects. This is, to a great degree, the necessary result of our constitution and circumstances. We are *compounded* beings; and close as is the union, yet the parts linked together are most dissimilar: and we may be said to belong to two worlds; being tenants of the one, and the destined heirs of the other. The *earthly body* weighs down the *unearthly and heaven-soaring spirit*. The attraction of the *material world* is in direct opposition to that of the *world of spirits*. The "*things temporal*" keep us from the contemplation of the "*things eternal*." The "*law of the flesh*"—the "*law of the members*," "wars against the *law of the mind*." In regard to somewhat of the division of the heart, we may therefore justly say, "this is my infirmity;" and if that infirmity be lamented rather than cherished, we may humbly trust that it will not be imputed to us *as sin*. For our comfort under the pressure of this infirmity, let us

remember that it will not continue for ever. In heaven, there will be nothing to draw us off from our God. The glorified and ethereal body will have nothing at variance with the glorified spirit. The things will then be *present* which are now *distant* and *future*, and “*seen*,” which are now “*unseen*.” Our companions will love God supremely, and with the eloquence of heaven, will “*provoke*” us unto holier love. Our associations will all be similar in character, and tend to bind us more and more firmly to our God. No cloud shall come between us and “the brightness of his glory.” We shall “*see him as he is*”—see him “*eye to eye, and face to face*;” and to see, will be to adore and love. Our hearts will be single, for our knowledge shall be perfect, and our joy shall be full.



## CHAPTER VIII.

THE HARDENED HEART—THE  
HEART OF ADAMANT.

“ But when Pharaoh saw that there was respite he hardened his heart.”

“ And Pharaoh hardened his heart at this time also.”

“ He that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief.”

“ Yea, they made their hearts as an adamant stone.”

“ Being past feeling.”

In our admirable liturgy we pray to be delivered from “ hardness of heart;” and perhaps in reference to none of the evils there enumerated and deprecated, has the believer greater cause to respond, in the sincerity and fervency of his spirit, “ Good Lord deliver us !” It would seem, then, that the Church evidently contemplated this “ hardness of heart,” as a *possible and probable evil*—as one of those sins or sinful conditions of the soul, so easily besetting us, as to be worthy of constant and special remembrance before God in public prayer.

Whether *hardness* is one of the *invariable* attributes of the natural heart, I am not prepared to decide. The negative of the question would

perhaps be *best supported by facts*. In the plastic season of childhood, there certainly is much tenderness of feeling, a lively sensibility to impression, and much pliancy of disposition; and to these the Saviour doubtless had reference when he said, "Except ye be converted and become as *little children*," &c. The infant or childish heart, rarely, most rarely, steels itself against human kindness; nor is there visible any decided repugnance to the admission of the more solemn and sacred claims of religion. Without admitting the vain and fanciful idea of *natural* or *intuitive religiousness*, we must still perceive that facile, deep, and permanent impressions belong to childhood and youth, of which the later periods of life are utterly incapable. This susceptibility constitutes the charm and the attractiveness, the importance and the value of these introductory periods of human existence. Every Christian parent makes this childish tenderness of feeling and conscience the basis of early moral culture; and Christendom, as a whole, has at length put forth a parent's efforts and a parent's tenderness for the young of her bosom, "the children which God hath given her."

But whatever comparative softness of heart and of character favourable to religious influence may be supposed to exist in the young, it is certain that it rapidly disappears and evanesces with succeeding years. Except where the direct

and meliorating influence of religion is brought in, the heart, left to itself and to the world, rapidly hardens. It would seem as though a change, "growing with its growth, and strengthening with its strength," passed over it, analogous to that which the body experiences. As in the almost cartilaginous bones of infancy become ossified, and the muscles acquire firmness, even so in the spiritual part, that which was flexible becomes firm and unyielding, and toughness and rigidity come over all that was tender. Every year, and month, and day of unrepentant existence hardens the heart more and more. When the bodily organ becomes the seat of a special disease, physicians inform us that its orifices and ventricles become *ossified*, and by that ossification utterly incapable of continuing the action and re-action essential to the continuance of animal life. No spiritual physician who has made the spiritual diseases of the heart his careful study, can be ignorant that something analogous to this ossification is far more common in "the inner man," than in the natural and animal part. Whether there be hardness originally or not, in all the impenitent it gradually supervenes. Much of it comes through intercourse and collision with the world—much of it through the gradual influence of time upon the mental and spiritual faculties—and much of it is to be traced to *self*—the carelessness or the wilfulness of men. And as the two former causes

can only operate through the last, I am disposed to view the *stony or adamantine heart*, that almost invariable concomitant of adult and aged impenitency, as the result of *personal induration*.

*Men harden their own hearts.*

The illustration of this truth ;

The *mode* in which this self-hardening is effected ;

The several steps which are taken, or degrees which are passed in the course, with the distinctive marks of each ;

The preventive and remedial discipline in the case.

These points properly considered will perhaps place this important subject fully before the reader in its practical bearings.

I. The induration of the heart is a *personal work*.

*Men harden their own hearts.*

I hold this to be almost a religious axiom ; scarcely seriously disputable under any circumstances, and rather to be admitted by the spontaneous and immediate acknowledgment of conscience, than to be established by process of reasoning ; and yet such is the lamentable self-deception of the human heart, that very many, I am persuaded, of those persons who do the most certainly harden their own hearts, “ yea, make them as an adamant stone,” will profess to others, and endeavour to persuade themselves, that they

are most desirous of having them softened and impressed.

It will be well to test their self-excuses, their crimination of others, their professions.

Would they throw the blame upon the necessary and unavoidable influences of their worldly condition, or upon the artifices of spiritual enemies? The agency of these we admit in its utmost extent. Yet will it not excuse them, nor disprove their own share in the promotion of their own spiritual injury.

That the world, with its vanity and corruptions—that evil men and seducers, by their converse and example—and that Satan, by his numberless devices—lend their combined influence to harden the soul, is most clear from Scripture and experience. But then it must be recollected, that these could have had no power over the heart, unless it were given to them by *itself*. That from *without* cannot injure, except through the concurrence of the *will within*: so that upon ourselves must at last be charged the guilt of all that was effected through their seduction—and that very hardness which we have connived at their effecting, may be regarded as having been accomplished by ourselves.

As to charging this state of the soul upon God, it is an excess of impiety from which reason and genuine piety alike revolt. We pity those who can so far delude themselves as to give it a place

in their minds or their creeds. Whatever be their professions, we can scarcely imagine that they believe it themselves. There is so much of absurdity or profanity in *making God the author of sin, and still its subsequent punisher*, that it scarcely calls for serious refutation. The only case or mode in which God may be said to harden mens' hearts, is when he does it *judicially*. It is in this sense that he is said in Scripture to "give them over to hardness of heart, and a reprobate mind"—to "give them up to strong delusion, that they should believe a lie"—to "make their ears heavy, and to close their eyes, and to make their hearts gross, lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and be converted and live." This, it will be observed, is in no case a primary act. It never occurs at the very *beginning* of probation to *prevent conversion*, but always at the *close* of an *abused probation*, after men have utterly "refused to repent"—and after natural causes have produced their appropriate result, of causing "repentance to be hidden from their eyes," and except by a special miracle, impossible to their hearts. Even in the oft-quoted and much-misrepresented case of Pharaoh, God was only said to have "hardened his heart," after it was recorded that he had repeatedly *hardened his own heart*. Without entering into any minute or laboured examination of his case, it will be

evident to an impartial mind, even on a cursory view of the attendant circumstances, that *he* was one "who, being often warned, hardened his heart;" and to him, therefore, by just and most righteous appointment, it happened that "he was suddenly destroyed, and that without remedy." There was in his case an illustrious display of divine forbearance. There was ever an interval for reflection, and a message from God, between judgment and judgment. "The fierceness of wrath" was not executed at once. "God waited to be gracious." Each new infliction of merited punishment exceeded the preceding in intensity, as though to show that God's resources were inexhaustible, and gradually to prepare a hardened spirit for yielding, by teaching it that it must yield, or else, resisting, *die*. The *catastrophe* came not, until "vial after vial of indignation had been poured out"—until warning after warning had proved vain—until hour after hour of merciful sufferance had been wasted—until promise after promise had been remorselessly broken—until *forbearance* had been misconstrued into the hope of impunity, and because "sentence against his evil work had not been executed speedily, the offender's heart was *set in him* to do evil." *Then*, and *then* for the *first*, came the *divine* hardening of the proud Egyptian's heart, as a preparative for still heavier but most justly merited judgment. And even in the case of judicial induration on

the part of God, the *mode of his procedure* is worthy of notice. It is not by any positive infusion of evil—by any direct act of power—by any hardening influence from above, that he accomplishes this meet process of his punitive and retributive justice. It is only by the withdrawal of a spurned and resisted spirit—by ceasing to strive with those, with whom his Spirit has long striven in vain—by a simple abandonment of men to pursuits which they have chosen, to habits they have formed, to lusts they have cherished, to evil ways which they have eagerly followed; it is only by this means that God instrumentally hardens the sinner's heart, or to speak more correctly, permits him to be the hardener of his own heart. He only removes his restraining grace; and moral destruction is then accomplished by natural and personal means. His very infliction is but a permission, or non-prevention, by which men are enabled the more easily and certainly to destroy themselves. It is the giving to them full scope, unfettered liberty, and then they "make their" own "heart like the adamant stone."

II. As to the *mode* in which this is done.

It may be done either casually and unintentionally, or deliberately and wilfully.

The first is the more common. It applies to a large class. The effect in their case is consequential, and very gradual. The evil influence



injunctions which he dares not transgress in public, and then adding sin to sin, covers his transgression with the mantle of falsehood, or with an audacity that apes the hardihood of maturer years, flaunts his disobedience insultingly before the parental eye, and causes a parent's heart to feel, in bitterness, "how sharper than a serpent's tooth," is filial perverseness and ingratitude—then even in what should be the tender years of tender childhood, he purposely hardens his heart against his parents upon earth, and his Father in heaven; and beginning thus early, he will prematurely make his heart *like an adamant stone*.

When *youthful profligacy* first begins its untempered course, and when conscience within rebukes, and nature by her external manifestations warns; the burning blush mantling on the cheek, and the quailing eye shunning observation—when friends remonstrate, when paternal authority is tempered by paternal tenderness, and a mother, in the agony of her soul, supplicates as for her life—and when all is still in vain—when the determinateness of sin triumphs over every better feeling, every holier resolve, bursts every bond, and mocks at every check—when conscience is disregarded until her pleading voice is scarcely heard, when natural shame is deadened, until the emboldened offender "is not ashamed at all, neither can he blush"—when friends are recklessly alienated, and the parricidal spirit goes

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coolly and resolutely onward to break a mother's heart, and to "bring down a father's gray hairs with sorrow, to the grave"—then *this* is to make the heart *as an adamant stone*.

If a man finds his principles troublesome to him, because they stand in the way of his sins; if he finds that his ideas of vice and virtue keep him back from many sinful indulgences of which others partake without seeming remorse; and if, in order to escape from this restraint, he endeavours sedulously to refine his crude, but still just ideas of morality, until he can make his mental estimate of what is right, sanction a practice which he knows to be wrong, then this man is personally endeavouring to make his heart *hard*; and if it can subsequently feel no more than the *adamant stone*, the *guilt* and the *punishment* of that inability *must both be his*.

*Again*: When an individual, contrary to the remonstrances of his own conscience, strives to corrupt his own practice, adding constant fuel to every unholy flame which burns within, and strengthening every yet nascent principle of evil which may there originate, and by following older offenders, daily matures himself in crime, then he is endeavouring *manfully*, (and doubtless the endeavour will at last be successful,) to make his heart like the *adamant stone*.

*Once more*: They who actually set themselves to resist every appeal of God's word, whether

publicly or privately addressed to them; who say to themselves individually, if others are so weak as to be moved to repentance and to tears, I at least will not; they, who when they find the appeal becoming serious, and beginning to work its way to the heart, and that heart already beginning to be moved—their fears all excited—or their remorse begun—tears ready to start to their eyes—a prayer for mercy ready to burst from their lips—and themselves on the point of yielding to the power of grace; then suddenly check this flow of inward feeling—drive back this fountain of tenderness towards the heart, dash the gathering tear from their eye, call up, by a desperate effort, all their cold philosophy, all their proud opposition—turn their backs upon him who pleads with them *but too forcibly*—shut up themselves and all their best affections in some angry disparaging thoughts—whisper to their tumultuous feelings, to their agitated hearts, “*this is enthusiasm, this is cant, this is hypocrisy;*” or again, be it what it may, truth or falsehood, affecting the righteous or the wicked, we at least will not yield—the truth shall not triumph over us; these, these are they who make their hearts *as an adamant stone*.

III. I notice that there are *degrees of this in-duration*.

“*Nemo repente turpissimus.*” was the just observation of a *Heathen poet*. From a more sacred

source we learn that "the way of the wicked seduceth them;" that they "go from iniquity to iniquity;" that they who at the beginning of their career, if warned of its ultimate termination, would have said, "Is thy servant a dog, that he should do these things," may ultimately verify the warning, and even do "greater things than these." The same law of *increase* or *progression* obtains in regard to the induration of the heart. There is the yet *tender heart* of susceptible childhood—there is the *partially hardened heart* of unsanctified youth—there is the *stony heart* of unrepentant manhood—there is the *adamantine heart* of ungodly age, or of rooted impenitency—and there is, last, the *reprobate heart*—the state "**PAST FEELING**"—"when repentance is hidden from the eyes"—when there is a very *death of the soul*!

It is not easy, and happily it is not needful, accurately to draw the dividing line between these several estates—to say where one terminates and another commences. It is enough to know that they are closely connected, and that he who begins with the first, will not improbably end *with the last*. Thus far at least, it may however be safe to go, in the statement of *discriminating marks*.

The milder terms are applicable to the earlier stages of vice and impiety. *Progress, not age*, is to furnish the test; for there is often a precociousness in vice, which causes a proportionately

early *induration*, while in others, the hardening influence which years of spiritual neglect might have been expected to produce, has been retarded or modified by occasional counteractive efforts, and seasons of softening sacred impulse.

The heart may be pronounced *hard*, or far advanced in the hardening process, when the natural *susceptibility*, the docile disposition which usually characterizes childhood, has given place to a growing callousness and indifference to all that is serious and sacred; and when this has become confirmed and increased, so that there is hardly an occasional impulse of spiritual feeling, nor a feeble gushing forth of emotion—when the heart is insensible to any appeal, *then have we the stony heart*. When there is not merely insensibility, but positive resistance to sacred influence—when that “word of God,” which is as a fire, or a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces,” makes no impression, but is forcibly repelled at every stroke, then see we the marks of *the heart of adamant*. Rarely indeed is *that* broken or melted to repentance. Becoming literally “past feeling,” there is stupid insensibility, brutish obstinacy, daring defiance, or a calm and desperate waiting for judgment. *The judgment comes*; and they that on earth seemed stronger than the God of grace, crushed and agonizing in the grasp of his Omnipotence, feel, and feel for ever, that “*it is a fearful thing to fall into the*

hands of THE LIVING GOD." And here pause, my reader, and seriously ask yourself, what is the state of your own heart. Has your "*conscience* become in *no wise* seared? Is the ingenuousness and the tenderness of *youth* still with you? Or have time and the world, and the flesh and the devil, exerted their malign and deadening influence? Do you feel as you ought, or can you feel *at all*? In a quiet hour, and a solemn frame, lay these questions to your hearts. "*Judge yourself, that you be not judged of the Lord.*"

It is well to be suspicious of ourselves—to be jealous with a holy jealousy—to "watch unto prayer;" but we must be careful that this be not perverted, either unto needless personal discomfort, or to uncharitableness in regard to others.

Let no one rashly conclude that his "judgment is passed from his God," that from him "mercy is clean gone for ever," that he is "*past feeling,*" and cannot repent. The *indulgence of the fear disproves the cause of the fear*. It attests its own groundlessness. If feeling were dead, fear would also have been entombed in its grave. As the sorrowful and despondent spirit, which disquiets itself in vain with the awful thought of having committed *the unpardonable sin*, the "sin against the Holy Ghost," gives decisive evidence that it is *far from* that sin of proud defiance, of dread presumption—even so does he who dreads lest he can *never repent*, establish the cheering

fact, that he *desires* repentance, and therefore that “repentance is not hidden from his eyes.”

Let none, therefore, be tempted to fall into despair of their spiritual affections, and through “desperation,” to rush into “recklessness of most unclean living, no less perilous than desperation.” This is a *device* of the enemy, which has slain its *thousands*. You cannot be abandoned of God, and sealed over to perdition, while you tremblingly fear *abandonment*.

NOR to OTHERS, let it be lightly imputed. This is forbidden by “the charity which hopeth all things.” It is not for man to read the heart of his fellow-man—to go down into its lowest depths—to measure its capacities—to decide on its destinies. It is not for *man* to limit the mercies of his God, or the ability of his converting grace. In no case may we extinguish hope, and cease from prayer and effort, until the last sigh is drawn, and until hope of influence on earth is extinguished in that darksome grave, where there is “no device nor repentance for ever.” Even then, charity will fear and grieve, rather than decide. She will not rashly, presumptuously “intrude into those things not seen, nor with unhallowed curiosity endeavour to discover the secrets of the prison house.” At the most, she will have rather a sad, sorrowful, shuddering conviction of the soul’s perdition, than a loud and confident proclamation of it, which seems to insult over the grave.

But now—

IV. The *preventive and remedial discipline*.

The former is the easier, the latter the more universally required. Familiar proverb has taught us that "prevention is better than cure;" yet, as in the great majority of cases, the hardness has already supervened, the curative no less than the prophylactic treatment must be stated.

And, 1. as preventive means—

*Cherish existing sensibilities.*

Endeavour to preserve even those of nature in all their freshness and force. Let all the tender feelings and sweet affections of the heart have full play. Encourage their developement. Be not afraid or ashamed of their manifestations. Dread not the reproach of unmanly weakness in yielding to their power. Break not the charm that in childhood and youth fondly lingers around the paternal home. "Honour" and love with holier tenderness "*thy father*," when age has bowed and whitened his head, and broken the staff of his strength. Blush not to be folded to a mother's breast, or to weep at a mother's grave. Let your brethren and sisters be dear to you, although the sports of your childhood are at an end, and its sweet intercourse broken for ever. There is virtue, there is power in these things. And even beyond this restricted but most hallowed sphere, cherish every feeling which bears the stamp of purity and God. "Thine own friend, and thy



father's friend, forsake thou not." "Be pitiful, be courteous." "As you have opportunity, do good unto all men." Let sympathy warm and expand, let the willing hand open in charity. "Weep with those that weep, and rejoice with those that do rejoice." These are some of the more amiable promptings even of the unrenewed heart, and they sweetly accord with that holier "law of Christ," the fulfilment of which it is to "bear one another's burdens." Happy, most happy will be their influence, in keeping the heart from the icy coldness, the absorbing selfishness, the steeled hardness which but too much belong to this evil world.

*Again: Cherish religious sensibilities.*

These perchance are faint and few. They are perhaps but the lingering traces, partially effaced, of early religious impression. They are connected with the prayer and the teachings of a mother's lips, the counsels of a father's piety, the instructions of the pastor of your youth, or with those of the unpretending unwearied instructor who simplified to you the lessons of the Bible and the sanctuary, and who made God's day a day of special culture to your young and tender soul. What though these sensibilities, well nigh extinguished, be but as a spark. Guard it, for it is sacred fire; the fire of heaven; and it may be fanned into a flame which shall burn brightly on the altar of the heart, until that heart be translated to bear the purer

*fre, and send up the more fragrant incense of heaven. They are now, but as "the grain of mustard seed;" still be they sheltered in the heart, for they shall yet become a "great tree." They are a little yet holy leaven; let it work its work, and it will still leaven the whole mass of thought and feeling. "The day of small things" must not be "despised." The faintest whisper of "the still small voice" of God, must not be purposely drowned. Even these feeble and expiring sensibilities, may be bound up with your hope of heaven, and if they are purposely destroyed, that hope may perish.*

A SECOND GENERAL DIRECTION IS THIS,

*Beware of all that has an actually hardening tendency.*

And, 1. *Avoid the most distant approaches towards lightness and irreverence in regard to sacred things.*

Jest not with the Book of God, neither wrest its sacred words to the purposes of idle accommodation or profane application. "Sit not in the seat of the scorner," neither listen to the scoffer's impious jest. The heart soon hardens, when all its hallowed associations are broken; when to it all things are common and profane, and when in the whole earth there is not to it one object of solemn awe, or of religious veneration.

2. *Avoid evil associations.*

The heart cannot long remain tender, when its

“chief companions and friends” are those who hate God and godliness. Whether they would undermine your principles, or corrupt your practice, they are alike dangerous. Their “words will increase unto more ungodliness.” The blight of their evil will come over the whole surface of the soul, blasting its every excellence of thought and purpose, *even in the bud*. The companion of the hardened must, like them, “make his neck iron, and his brow brass,” and his heart “like the nether mill-stone,” or they will not tolerate his scruples, nor can he abide their daring.

3. *Sear not conscience.*

Let its dictates be unto you as the voice of God. Let its warnings be unto you as *his* hand, holding you back from sin and death. Let its injunctions be as “the cords of *his* love,” drawing you to holiness and heaven. You may, by resistance, impair its force. You may cause its voice to be dumb for ever. But remember, that when it ceaseth to speak, your heart will become as adamant.

Finally. *Resist not convictions.*

These are the beginnings of good. They are God's own strivings with you for your salvation. They cannot be neutral in their character and consequences. They either benefit or injure. They usually prove either “the savour of life unto life, or of death unto death.” Improved and followed up, they will “renew a right spirit within you.” Resisted and repelled, they may

return no more! and then, God's Spirit withdrawn, you perish!

OUR LAST GENERAL ADMONITION IS THIS,  
*You must seek positive good.*

It is idle to expect that it will come to you as by chance or by miracle—that you will find it as your feet carelessly wander in the “high way of life,” or that “a sign from heaven” will aid you to its attainment. No, my reader; *put yourself in the way of influence; go where moral good may reasonably be expected; listen to the faithful counsellings of private friendship, affection, and piety; even from them there may come to you the “word in season,” and that word in season, “behold how good it is!” The Scriptures, why should they be unto you “as a sealed book and a dead letter?” Were they not “written for your learning also, that you, through patience and comfort, might have hope?” “Search them,” then, and see if to you they testify not convincingly of God's blessed Son? See if to you they show no record of mercy, and no charter of salvation. And in the house of God there seek the blessing of God, for there hath he promised his blessing, even life for ever more. There he is more especially present, and there does he manifest himself, as he doth not unto the world. “Seek him” there, “where he may be found; call upon him” there, “where he is near.”*

We can conceive of impenitency settling and

thickening over the soul of him who spurns the appointed means of melioration—who disdains to pray, to read, to hear, to “wait upon God,” but never, never *over him* whose Bible is his text-book, whose private mercy-seat is his refuge, and whose feet make ‘haste to the sanctuary of God. He *cannot become worse, he must become better*. His soul shall not be given over to desolation. It shall rather be as a watered garden. “God shall make it soft with the drop of rain, and bless the increase of it.”

But what and if this preventive discipline which we have thus sketched, be commended to you all too late? What and if the mischief be already done? the heart partially indurated, yea, made as *an adamant stone*? What then? Are you shut up in impenitency? Is your doom sealed for ever? Nay, my readers, there is a remedy—the Gospel is a remedial system. It was meant for the *hard in heart*. Its Author came “to seek and to save even that which was *morally lost*”—“to call sinners, yea, even the chief of sinners, to repentance.” Even for you there is hope, but hope only through effort. There is One who can break the stony heart, and “take it away and give you a heart of flesh.” There is One who can raise the spiritually dead to life. Call upon Him with the importunity of prayer. Although seemingly unheard, yet pray again and again the more earnestly. *Hope even against hope*. In the very

effort and act of prayer, your stony heart will become "broken and contrite;" and lo, for your encouragement it is written, "A broken and contrite heart, O God, wilt thou not despise."

## CHAPTER IX.

## CONCLUSION.

Our intended survey of the heart in its state by nature is now completed. It might have been easily, perhaps profitably, extended. Other fields, not unworthy of observation, might have been examined—views might have been taken from other points—and the sketches here presented might have been more ample in outline, and more perfect in filling up. Enough, however, it is trusted, has been presented, to give a faithful picture of its general condition. We have seen its surface blighted and withered by sin—neglected by its possessors—uncheered by the refreshing dews of grace. To none could the view be pleasing. We like not to look upon the traces of desolation and decay. The most stately ruins are *ruins still*; and the ideas awakened by their contemplation, although interesting, are still sad and painful. That they are not more so, in the case of the works of creation and the monuments of human art, must be ascribed to the fact, that we are mere *spectators*; with an interest in them so remote,

as to be wholly unconnected with feeling, while even the sadness that steals upon us is almost lost in the sublimity and awe which they inspire. But is not so with the *moral* ruin caused by sin, consequent on the fall. This concerns us *individually*. It is the ruin, not only of our common but of our *personal* nature. We are *individually* the sufferers. It is the heritage of our *own heart* that is laid waste. Hence the common reluctance to look upon our natural condition as it is. The natural man, shocked at the view, boldly denies its correctness: the spiritual man, aware of its fidelity, is ready to weep as he beholds it. Yet to all it may be useful. True philosophy teaches us to look upon things as they are, instead of fancying them what we desire them to be—to admit facts when their evidences are clear, how painful soever be the inferences—and to rise above that moral cowardice which is afraid to look an evil fairly in the face, or to measure it in its length and breadth. Had God provided, and could man employ, no remedy for moral evil, then “ignorance were bliss!” but as a remedy has been provided, and is commensurate with the requirement, the survey of *fallen* nature, nature in ruins, cannot lead us to despair, but will only point us to the Great Restorer. To the un-renewed, a just delineation of their state may, “through prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Christ,” lead to a blessed and renovating change.



while believers, "renewed in the temper and spirit of their minds," by this retrospect of a state which once was theirs, may be excited to holy gratitude, by the thought, that it is theirs no longer. An inspired apostle has beautifully introduced a reflection like this:—"For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour towards man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but by his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost;" and well would it be for "all who love the truth," and whom "the truth has made free," occasionally to review their former state in their ignorance, their sins and their sufferings, their affliction and their misery, the wormwood and the gall; yea, to have them always in remembrance, that their heart may be humbled within them.

Let me trust, my readers, that not in vain shall we have gone over the ground already measured: and that if *the poetry* of our state has been robbed of its charm, you will have in its place just and practical views of solemn realities. You have seen the evil; go with me a little further and you will perceive the good. If you have started in affright at the picture of man in his degeneracy, when the image of God, in which he

had been created, was lost, you will look with delight upon his likeness, when renewed again after the image of Christ. We are now to leave the territories of a sin-disordered world—the barren heath—the sandy desert—the gloomy wilderness —“the land of the shadow of death”—and we are to enter upon the examination of “*a good land;*” a country of surpassing loveliness, where prospects of rich and glowing beauty abound—a country presenting abundant traces of spiritual culture—a very “garden of the Lord,” watered by the streams of grace, “the rivers that make glad” the heritage of God—rich in the waving harvests, the goodly fruits of righteousness. That land of spiritual fruitfulness, cultured, and tended, and blessed of God, is before us. Let us hasten to its examination.



## **PART SECOND.**

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**THE HEART AS RENEWED BY  
GRACE.**

discoverable, the fact itself is questioned. The great difficulty apparently is this—that both knowledge and feeling usually come to us by association with the visible world, through the medium of our external senses; and that we consequently find it extremely difficult to conceive of an illumination of the mind, and an impulse given to the feelings, secretly, but directly from God, without the aid of the external senses, independently of “the sight of the eye, and the hearing of the ear.” That the real difficulty lies here, will be admitted by all who have attended to the suggestions of their own minds, or to the objections usually urged by others. Without intending any laboured solution of this difficulty, or entering deeply into the philosophy of the matter, it is evident that *our ignorance as to the mode*, forms no valid reason for rejecting *the fact* of a secret Divine influence upon the heart. The *ordinary* mode of imparting knowledge and of exciting feeling, is not necessarily the *only* mode. The resources of Deity are infinite in number, and the power of Deity unlimited in extent. The possibility, and even probability, of a direct agency of his Spirit upon our spirits, without any interposing medium, might be inferred, moreover, from the attraction or affinity, as well as the repulsion, which is known to exist between the spirit of man and man here upon earth—from the powerful, rapid, and extensive influence of the *sympathetic principle*—from the

deep impressions made upon the soul, and the vigour of its energies, when the bodily senses are either injured or precluded from their wonted exercise—from their admitted existence and activity when separated from the body, and the consequent probability of their power to receive impression independently of the body, even during their union with it—and, lastly, from the necessary supposition that **HE** who is a pure Spirit, and the Father of our spirits, cannot but have at all times access to the *spirits which he has formed in his image*.

They, therefore, who scoff at the very idea of Divine influence, as an absurdity, know little of the nature of their own spirits, and still less of the Immateriality, the Omnipresence, and the Omnipotence of God. But with such I enter into no protracted argument, I wage no war of words. There is little hope that **this** unpretending volume would fall into their hands, or that **its** contents would touch their hearts. Our best hope for them is from that **same** secret agency of God which their theory rejects.

There is another class, from ~~whom~~ a candid consideration of the subject is asked and hoped. They are those who, while receiving the *general* doctrine of spiritual influence, still give it but a nominal place in their creeds, and no place **what-**  
**ever** in their **hearts**—and who, from the perversions and ~~abuses~~ of the doctrine ~~by~~ the ignorant

and fanatical, have been led to look with suspicion upon every attempt to illustrate its nature and extend its influence; and to consider even the *terms* Grace, Renovation, Sanctification, as of doubtful orthodoxy, as ominous of latent enthusiasm. The prejudices of such, it is to be feared, very seriously obstruct their own spiritual improvement. Endeavouring to discard for a little time these prejudices, it would be well for them to remember, that the *abuse* of terms does not justify their *disuse*—that the counterfeit presupposes somewhat that is genuine, and that doctrines may have been sadly distorted by man, which were originally revealed by God. The candid consideration by their *minds*, of the *doctrine of grace* in its scriptural simplicity and purity, may perhaps dispose their *hearts* to receive that “grace of God which bringeth salvation.”

Difficult and delicate indeed is the task of describing, correctly, the heart when under the influence of grace. When an earthly object is acted upon by two or more conjoint forces, we have formulæ for calculating its direction, its momentum, and its ultimate position. But it is not so in regard to the soul of man. We have no means of *resolving* the *combined force* under which it acts—of estimating the quantity of the separate forces and the momentum which each would impart. The divine and human agency are so strangely and inextricably intermingled, as

to defy all separation. We can ascertain that both are at work, but we cannot learn where the one ends and the other begins, nor what part is respectively performed by each: and this difficulty is still further increased, and even rendered altogether insuperable, by the fact, that *the grace of God often, and even generally, acts through the medium of the human reason and moral powers*; so that we may often suspect its presence and agency where it is not present, and fail to discover it when it is. If man were a simple and self-moving agent, mistakes as to his character and conduct would be less probable and less dangerous; but while there is this singular blending of innate and extraneous, of earthly and heavenly influence in his motives, mistake would be the more probable, and it might reflect upon the character, and derogate from the power of *God*. It is to be regretted when *human* action is unintentionally misrepresented; but we would far more deprecate a misconception of the *actings of God*. It is no trivial thing to lay to his charge what may be inconsistent with his attributes and foreign from his purpose—to ascribe to *his Spirit* the wayward fancies, or strange inconsistencies of man; thus making him responsible for the anomalies of human feeling, and for the conclusions drawn by others, from the observation of individual conduct. From presumption like this, the author would fain be clear. He desires to think



reverently, and to speak guardedly, of that mysterious spiritual agency which none can now fully explain, and which few will understand until that period, when it shall no longer need explanation, and when all mysteries shall be done away,—an agency which influences, yet strangely harmonizes with our own—which moulds and changes thought, purpose, feeling, action, and still leaves us personally accountable—an agency which makes us *new creatures*, and still *destroys not our identity*. This is unquestionably to be ranked among “*the deep things of God*.” To fathom its depth is beyond our power; to plunge into it rashly would be to lose and destroy ourselves. Not in the spirit of rash presumption or of wild speculation, but in the spirit of humble confidence in God, and of devout “looking unto Jesus,” would the writer launch forth upon this “mighty deep;” having the Word of God as his chart, and the Spirit of God as his guide. No new and bold theories on the subjects of grace and conversion must be expected. These, the writer dares not broach, and none who love the truth in its soberness, and the safety of their souls, will desire. Imagination, therefore, will have little scope in the following sketch of the renewed heart. Facts will be the basis of assertions, and care will be taken that *general assertions be not predicated upon particular cases of personal experience*. This is deemed especially important. The neglect of it

has induced some to endeavour to bring all others, by a sort of Procrustes process, to the same spiritual dimensions, while it has induced others, favoured of God with such tokens of Divine influence as were compatible with their state and temperament, to distrust these, and distress themselves, because their *private experience* was not co-extensive with the united experiences of all the pious whom they knew, or, in other words, did not embrace the aggregate experience of the religious world. If it were possible that this delusive expectation should have been realized, the separate parts would have been equal to the whole, and in the moral world there would have been distinguishable *classes*, but no distinguishable *individuals* under those classes. *Personal Christian character* there would be none; for it would be merged in the *generic* character. Spiritual individuality would be at an end. But this, God himself has prevented. He has distinguished not only *class* from *class*, but also *man* from *man*. There are general laws of spiritual influence, according to which he deals with all his children: but there are accommodations of this discipline to the peculiarities of their individual temperament and circumstances. Now, this accords with all the analogies that can bear upon the case. *Variety* is one of the great charms of the kingdom of nature. In connexion with unity of design, harmony of proportion, and regularity of

operations, it is one of the wonderful arrangements of the wonder-working Omnipotent Creator. Uniformity delights us, as exhibited in generic and specific identity—variety is secured by individual peculiarities. The naturalist readily classes the plant or the animal under its proper *genus* and *species*; but when he compares the units of the species one with another, he can distinguish each from his fellow. In some respects all years are alike, for in each there are the standing “ordinances of the day and the night, the seed time and harvest, the winter and summer;” and the seasons of one, bear a general resemblance to the corresponding seasons of another. Yet the history of one year would differ widely from that of another; and the metereological journal of the accurate observer would show, that seasons the most closely similar had yet their distinctive peculiarities. *It is the same in the kingdom of grace.* The seasons of grace that go to make up the year of Christian experience until that year wanes in the autumn of age, and is closed by the winter of death, all, on a general inspection, wear the same appearance, and succeed each other in a fixed order; yet they are not absolutely undistinguishable. In the department of Christian feeling and character, there are divisions and subdivisions; an easy and marked classification; generic and specific traits; but in addition to these, there are ten thousand nice and delicate shades of

individual peculiarity; so that, as no two individuals have exactly the same form and features, neither have any two exactly the same moral impress—a perfect identity of spiritual state and character. As God variously distributes the gifts of mind and body to men, even so does it please him to dispense the richer gifts of grace, in different measures, and in varied combinations. It was undeniably thus in regard to the *miraculous* gifts of the Spirit. “To one,” according to the testimony of St. Paul, was allotted, “by the same Spirit, the gifts of healing; to another, the working of miracles; to another, prophecy; to another, discerning of spirits; to another, divers kinds of tongues; to another, the interpretation of tongues;” and yet “all these worked that one and the self-same spirit, dividing to every man severally as he would.” Experience teaches us, that a similar variety or diversity characterizes the *ordinary* influences of the Spirit. In regard to them also we may say, “Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit; and differences of administration, but the same Lord; and diversities of operations, while it is the same God who worketh *all in all*.” There are some ordinary processes in the work of renovation, which are rarely wanting. There are some leading traits which we may expect to find in each spiritual class. These will be exhibited. To go further, would be to descend to the minuteness and personality of reli-

gious biography. It is here intended only to mark the wonted stages of that "way which they had not known," by which God is pleased to "lead the blind" to light and life; and not to narrate the incidents which befall each pilgrim by the way. It is enough that these usual stages are passed, to convince the traveller that he is in the right path, and is advancing towards the city of his destined inheritance: or if the spiritual life, like the natural, be compared to a voyage, it is enough that the Christian steers the appointed course, and finds the proper soundings, and observes the first great land-marks, to convince him that he is near, and may hope to reach, "the haven where he would be." And it is to be noted, that any thing more special than this, in Christian experience, is to be learned by *personal* experience, and not from books. Let no one here expect then, an exact delineation of what may be termed the *topography* of his own heart. It is better known to *himself* than it could be to the writer; but better still to his God. For that, therefore, let him look inward upon himself, and upward to the mercy-seat; "commune with his own heart, and with his God," *and thus discover* what grace has done for his own soul.

There is one solemn conviction, under which the reader is requested to prosecute all inquiries on this important subject, and that is, that the ordinary grace of God's Spirit is, under the

Gospel, freely offered to all; but that it must be specially appropriated and improved by all, in order to be availing to their salvation. The *manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withall*. And the great law by which is regulated the continuance and increase, or the decrease and removal of grace, is this—“*For to every one that hath, shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but from him that hath not, shall be taken away even that which he hath.*”

## CHAPTER II.

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### THE HONEST AND GOOD HEART.

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- “ But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it.”
- “ Thy heart is not right in the sight of God.”
- “ Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to come and seek the Lord.”
- “ Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and evil speakings, as new born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.”

To those who are wedded to human systems, the “honest and good heart” mentioned by the Saviour, would, perhaps, give rise to no small degree of speculation. By one class of interpreters it might perhaps be considered as bearing very decisive testimony to the idea of natural innocence and excellence, independently of Divine assistance; while theologians of an opposite school might find it hard to understand and explain, how “the heart” could be “honest and good,” before the reception of the good seed of the word, and consequently not indebted to it for its goodness.

The triumph of the one, and the difficulty of the other, will vanish, when it is remembered, that, in this instructive parable, *the good seed sown* is the *word of truth*, the *spoken or preached word*, and *not* the ordinary grace of God. The parable itself contradicts the idea of intuitive religiousness. Righteousness was not the spontaneous growth of the heart, nay, even the very seeds of excellence were not there sown. God sowed them; and if he had not, there would have been no spiritual harvest. The "honest and good heart" can be construed into nothing more than a state of willingness to receive and preparedness to cherish, the good seed of the word: and lest corrupt nature should hence take to itself undue credit, it would be easy to prove that even for this favourable state or disposition, it was indebted to the prior care and culture of the Great Spiritual Husbandman.

I shall not contend for a *neutral ground* in religion—a state or territory midway between belief and unbelief, in which we belong neither to God nor the world, neither to Christ nor Belial. This would be inconsistent with his own strong expression—"He that is not with me, is against me; and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth abroad." Still, in many cases, there is something which very closely approximates to this neutrality. The soul is disarmed of positive and active opposition, but has not as yet yielded cheerful, positive,



unreserved obedience. *Reluctance* is succeeded by *willingness* to receive the good seed of the word—and still it is not yet received. The *preparation* of the heart precedes the actual occupancy of the heart by the seed sown, or the springing blade. In other cases, however, of comparatively rare occurrence, which can only be regarded as the anomalies or exceptions in religious experience, this regular and natural order seems to be inverted; and the word is received into an *unprepared heart*, by *no means* “honest or good,” itself furnishing the means and doing the work of preparation, and leading onward to that state, in which there will be a spiritual return, thirty, sixty, or an hundred fold. In such cases, the natural and unbelieving man is “the strong man armed”—and the word, or rather the Spirit, by means of the word, is that “one stronger than he, which cometh and taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted,” and “bringeth him into captivity to the law of Christ.” The Sauls “breathing forth threatening and slaughter,” are stricken to the earth, and made humbly to ask the direction, “Lord, what wilt thou have us to do?” The subjects of this unsought and unexpected Divine influence, are themselves amazed when they discover and feel its effects. They are astonished at the new and better thoughts, feelings, desires, purposes, which seem to have sprung up spontaneously within them, as in a night; and

reversing the language used in the parable, they ask, "Did not we sow evil seed? From whence then have we this wheat?" These, however, I repeat it, are the mere exceptions among the recipients of God's grace; from whose cases no general inferences can be drawn. They merely establish the fact, that God is sometimes "found of them that sought not for him;" and that, in his own sovereignty, and for his own wise purposes, dispensing at the first with human co-operation, "*the preparation of the heart in man, and the answer of peace,*" and the *promise of the harvest* are all directly from him.

In all ordinary cases, however, the word must be received into *an honest and good heart*, a heart prepared for its reception, or it will not germinate and flourish.

The two inquiries that immediately present themselves and claim our attention are these—

*What constitutes the honest and good heart?*

And,

*How far, while mainly dependent upon the grace of God, it is in the power of men themselves?*

To inquiries so important and so entirely practical in their bearing, I solicit the reader's close and serious attention.

1. What constitutes "the honest and good heart?"

For the sake of brevity and precision I will

mention but two particulars, to which all others may be reduced, viz.—*Strict impartiality of mind—and, such a state of the heart or affections as will dispose, not to spurn and resist, but to desire, seek, and welcome, the influence of God's Word and Spirit.*

We are told that “the natural man receiveth not, neither indeed can he receive, the things of the Spirit of God;” from this cause of moral inability, “that they seem foolishness unto him.” His *mind* is occupied by unfriendly prejudices against the truth, while his heart has a secret but rooted enmity against God. Now, the first effect of an incipient better influence, is exhibited in the removal of the impediments in the way of faith and repentance. Still retaining that expressive figure, in which the heart is represented as a field to be cultivated and made productive, it is evident that the first work to be performed is the plucking up of evil weeds, the removal of the thorns, and briars, and rubbish, the “gathering out the stones thereof,” and the turning up of its indurated surface. Without this it were vain to deposit the seed, for it cannot take root. Apply this spiritually, and it will be perceived that the doubts which have grown up and strengthened themselves, and the prejudices which, thick, and tangled, and matted together, have covered its surface, must be removed from the mind, and the hard and *stony* heart must be meliorated by culture; and,

when this is done, what spiritual labourer, or anxious observer, but will feel that the most formidable obstacles in the way of moral improvement are surmounted? The seed of God's word never falls in vain *upon a rightly prepared soil*. In God's time, and by his ordinary blessing upon his own appointed means, it springs up and comes to maturity, so that the great thing is, to have the heart right with God, ready for his influences.

2. Let us inquire,

*How far, while mainly dependent on the grace of God, the attainment of this honest and good heart is in the power of men themselves?*

Our indebtedness to Divine grace for the power to originate and continue holy thoughts, and to embody them in action, is unquestionable. It follows necessarily from our condition as creatures, and especially as fallen creatures. It must be considered, therefore, in our subsequent remarks, as always presupposed, even when not expressed. The reader will further carry with him the idea, that to those who live under the Gospel scheme of grace and mercy, *we regard this necessary predisposing grace as always given*; so that if men will obey Divine monition, and co-operate with God's preventing grace, doing their part of the work of preparation, all will be right; and the honest and good heart, the sincere, right, and profitable disposition for the reception of the word, will not be wanting.

There is that which *man can do*, which *God designed him to do*, and which he *must do*, or any and every measure of grace will be received in vain.

*And, first*: As to the state of the mind. Will any say that hostile prejudices and a general aversion to Gospel truth *come to them unavoidably*, and are afterwards *beyond their control*? Assuredly it is not so. Prejudices and aversions, are often indeed insensibly imbibed, and acquire great strength before they are fully perceived. They are drawn in as it were with the nourishment of infancy, or are bequeathed to us as a cruel paternal legacy, or grow out of the evil training of our early years, or the unhallowed associations of later life: but still none must assert that they may not be either self-cherished or personally displaced; and that the power of disabussing the mind of their influence, and of bringing it to a state of fairness and impartiality, is not attainable by all who have attained the maturity of reason, and who have the ordinary opportunities of investigation and improvement. Yet how stands the case with those who have a vague but still strong prejudice against genuine and deep *personal* religion—who have always looked upon it with an evil eye, and felt towards it a secret antipathy? Is there one honest, manly, vigorous effort made to shake off the trammels of this *prejudice*, to change this antipathy? On the contrary,

are they not permitted to fetter the freedom of mind, and to poison the springs of the heart, and to give their own law to thought, feeling, and conduct? Is not every little circumstance that would increase their power, noted and treasured up in memory? and does not that power increase day by day, at the expense, and on the ruins, of rational and moral liberty? Truly we may all blame ourselves, if not for the origin, at least for the continuance of causeless aversion to the truth; and they who have so rooted and inveterate a dislike, not of the Gospel in *general*, in the *abstract*, but of the Gospel as it appeals to and bears upon them, of all *personal religion*, as to render it almost impossible that their hearts should come under its influence, have either ministered to the strength, or winked at the growing usurpations of this dislike—and even now lack the moral courage, to make one determined effort to regain their independence, and to stand forth as fit subjects for grace from on high, as fair candidates for eternal blessedness, so that God, by his providence and law, Christ by the Gospel, the Spirit by his strivings, may bring the truth effectually to bear upon them, and save their souls alive.

*Again:* Even where no mental prejudices stand in the way. How is it with that *indifference* which “cares for none of these things”—which, instead of the improper pre-occupancy of mind, seems to be a perfect vacuity of mind—which,

instead of the perversion of feeling, is the total absence of feeling—is even this an accidental and a cureless matter? Are we irresponsible for it before God, and devoid of all remedy against it ourselves? Is it not, on the contrary, perfectly evident, that the cause and the sin lie at our own door? And that the reflections and acts which would arouse us from it, must be our own? Although the fountains within be sluggish and lethean as the sea of Sodom, we must ourselves, “through Christ strengthening us,” (his strength being presupposed in all personal spiritual endeavour,) move and agitate them. From the slumber of indifference, and the very death of feeling, we must quicken and rouse ourselves, for the command is, “Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead.”

It may seem as though all were cold and dark within—and yet, from the latent spark of God’s grace, there may be kindled the flame of zeal for eternal interests, which shall cheer and warm the whole soul. In regard to earthly things, men certainly do, by a personal effort, shake off sloth and torpor. They *do* rouse themselves to a just concern for present interests, and a vigorous prosecution of temporal pursuits. They reflect—and reflection incites to diligence, sets the springs and wheels of their mental and bodily machinery in motion. They gather together motives, and these *motives* have their effect. Now, why should it not

be thus in *spiritual* things? In regard to *them*, reflection would as naturally *commence*, and for reasons of infinitely greater weight, ought to be pursued and cherished—the choice of motives is wider, and the motives themselves more elevated in character, and endued with a holier force. The most pitiable trifler upon earth, with his eternal interests, who, thus far, has not thought of them at all, can, through the grace of God, lead himself to think, and to think seriously and soberly. There is no natural or moral necessity, because of which any are compelled to hear or to read God's word in dreamy listlessness, as though they heard or read it not: for previous reflection and resolve, in the spirit of prayer and faith, would break the charm or the spell, how potent soever that has held them, quicken mind to its work, generate a personal concern in subjects of lasting and awful moment, and redeem the passing days of their pilgrimage from vanity, or, at the best, from being very blanks among the pages of the book of life: so that they are personally guilty for suffering upon and within them, that spirit of carelessness and dulness which precludes the faintest hope of spiritual benefit, and which can never consist with the honest and good heart, which receives the word and improves it.

But, 2dly, As to *the heart*.

To overcome its natural enmity, and to bring the moral affections to a right state, is certainly a



more difficult work, in which *prayer* must be specially relied on, and in which the grace of God will be far more conspicuous than the assiduity of man. And yet even here, while to God it appertains effectually to "take away the heart of stone," and to "give an heart of flesh," he has not chosen that man should be altogether passive. Even the unrenewed can do much, either to perpetuate and deepen their animosity against God, or to convince themselves of its unreasonableness, its utter futility when directed against him, and its certain re-action upon themselves. It is only necessary that, *as reasonable men*, they should bring reason fairly into play; and that as honest and candid men, they should deal by the Gospel and its Author with somewhat of that common fairness which marks their dealings with their fellow men; and that as those who live under *the light*, and must be judged by *the law* of the Gospel, they would walk by that light, and submit themselves to that law, and then all will be well. "Doth our law judge any man before it hath heard him," was a question very pertinently asked by one living under a far less perfect law than ours; nor is it common to hate another without a cause; yet it would be well to ask whether the Gospel is not often pre-judged and condemned without a hearing, and its Divine Author not only "hated without a cause," but in opposition to *every reason that should induce men to love and*

serve him. It is very important for those who are still alienated from God, to ascertain something concerning that perfectly loose and vague repugnance to sacred things, of which they now know nothing; and to test fairly the validity of these excuses for self, which they have hitherto received without examination. In the course of such an investigation, their causeless opposition will gradually weaken and die; they will think less highly of themselves and more highly of God; and they will be continually approximating more closely towards that right state of the affections, "that honest and good heart," in which the word takes root with ease, and brings forth fruit with patience, to the honour and glory of God!

## CHAPTER III.

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### PRIMARY INFLUENCES—SPIRITUAL CONCERN.

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- “ Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their hearts, and said, Men and brethren, what shall we do ? ”
- “ Seeking rest, but finding none.”
- “ Thine arrows stick fast in me, and thy hand presseth me sore.”
- “ I am troubled, I am bowed down greatly ; I go mourning all the day.”
- “ Mine iniquities are gone over my head ; as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me.”
- “ Why art thou cast down, O my soul ? Why art thou disquieted within me ? Hope thou in God.”
- “ Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

**SUPPOSING** the word or the grace of God to have been received, what will be its primary effects ?—how will it first display its influence ? The answer to this question will form the subject of the present chapter.

In some cases, the spiritual progress is so rapid, that we cannot trace all the steps in the course. The chain of Divine influence and of human experience, is so finely wrought, and so curiously

united, that we discern not all the separate, especially the *primary* links. In such cases little or nothing is obvious and prominent to the eye, until it rests upon the tokens of *spiritual sorrow*.

Generally, however, there is an introductory stage of *restlessness, inquietude, and self-dissatisfaction*, before, as yet, the impressed and awakened spirit has sufficiently turned its reflections inward upon self to produce compunction and repentance. *This*, it is proposed now to illustrate—a state, in which there is emotion without religious affection—an excitement and disturbance of the feelings, without their proper and religious direction. Now it is altogether natural, and to be expected, that there should be such a stage in the experience of the spiritual man. The first throwing in of light upon the diseased eye, or upon those who have long been kept in darkness, occasions restlessness and pain. Is it not to be presumed, then, that the first introduction of spiritual light upon the long-closed “eyes of the understanding,” upon the sin-darkened mind, would produce a similar effect? Would it not necessarily disturb the sluggishness of feeling, and excite rapid, strong, and almost convulsive movements of mind, and, at first, would not these movements be fitful, irregular, undefined, and undefinable?

Another analogy may be employed.

When a pestilential influence is epidemic, taking to itself “the wings of the morning,”

sporting in the sun-beam at "the noon-day," and brooding over a devoted spot under the dusky cover of the night; although it taints the air, yet has it no individual influence, until it is received into the system; and then, before as yet its symptoms are fully developed, the first ground for suspicion that it is secretly and insidiously at work, is furnished by the fact of a dulness of mind and spirit, a general languor and restlessness, seemingly without cause, and yet beyond control. Even so, when the powerful but not malignant influence of the Divine Word and Spirit is abroad, until it is appropriated, until it takes hold upon the individual man, it is to him as though *it were not*; and when it does first seize upon the moral system, we see not usually the more marked symptoms of compunction and self-aborrence, but only a strange and apparently causeless disarrangement of the moral feelings—a vague uneasiness—an incipient change, of which time and results are to show whether it shall be for the better or the worse. In fact, the exhibition of these primary influences of grace are altogether anomalous, and defy all regular classification. The mind and heart are then in their *agitation*, and it is not until *this* subsides that we can ascertain the level at which they will stand, or speak with precision of the deposit that will be left at their subsidence.

Among those who have evidently been "pricked

at the heart," whose heart "God has touched," the symptoms of incipient influence are exceedingly various. In some they are far from obvious, partly because they are not strongly marked in themselves, and partly from an anxious effort for their concealment. Still, even in these cases, the practised eye of the Christian examinant can scarcely fail to discover them. There will always be somewhat to bespeak the "mind ill at ease;" a restlessness of spirit, a perturbation of air and manner, a hurrying to and fro, as though they were "seeking rest, but finding none;" and although, with Spartan endurance, they may seek to hide in their bosoms that which is preying upon their vitals, and neither by word nor act betray their inward torture—under the apathy of manner and of look, to which they have schooled themselves, some flitting traces of mental anguish, not to be mistaken, may be discerned. Known only to the mind through which they hurry, are *the thoughts*, which at this stage of the spiritual course chase each other with such lightning speed, or which meet and conflict for the mastery on its surface; and known only to the *heart itself*, are those "searchings of heart," which it is compelled to make and to endure.

Now succeeds the more equable and more intelligible state of *settled and deep concern for the soul's salvation*; that state in which the question comes home with overwhelming force to the

anxious mind, “ *What* shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” —when the kindred question is anxiously asked of the book, of the people, of the ministers of God, “What must I do to be saved?” When this takes full hold upon the mind, it affords good ground for the indulgence of a Christian hope of a profitable result; for, connected as it always is with solemn and awful views of the Divine holiness and justice, and of the retributions of eternity, it is identical with that “fear of God, which is the beginning of wisdom,” and which, in its ultimate results, will induce “to depart from evil.” Its degree will of course vary according to temperament, the past habits and present occupation of life, and the means which are used to divert, or counteract feeling; yet where the truth has struck home, it will *never be wholly wanting*, and will usually be deep. It ordinarily triumphs over all minor considerations, and gain the ascendancy over all rival feelings. It makes pleasure seem vapid, and business irksome, and, in supreme anxiety after eternal things, swallows up all petty carking cares connected with the life that now is. It becomes, in fact, an absorbing feeling, causing nature to forget her wonted wants and infirmities, and every thought and effort be directed “to the one thing needful.” “The eyes do not sleep, nor the eyelids slumber, neither do the temples of the head

take any rest." The sufferer "forgets to eat his bread, or moistens it with tears, and mingles his drink with weeping;" and so complete is the *concentration*, and so great the *intensity* of feeling, that unless God mercifully interposed, and by his Spirit whispered the hope of peace and pardon, it is scarcely to be conceived that life could continue, or, at the least, that reason could maintain her throne.

It is not improbable that, by many, these representations of spiritual concern will be considered as altogether extravagant and visionary. Even among *professing Christians*, there is a large class, who, having passed through no deep exercises of mind themselves, can have no conception of their taking place in others; and who consider all assertions of their actual experience as feigned, through compliance with what they deem the overwrought enthusiasm and cant phraseology of the day; or else as the result of a diseased imagination, a morbid sensibility. In addition, moreover, to these cold, phlegmatic believers, who have repented without sorrow, or sorrowed without pain, and who are professedly attending to spiritual duties, without having felt any concern as to their eternal destiny, there will be the whole class of infidel objectors, of profane scoffers, who think it of all things the most ludicrous, that men should remember that they have a soul, or should care at all for the location and welfare of that soul.



in its future and eternal state. Hopeless of convincing these, and therefore waiving all extended argument with them, I would only ask, what is more natural than the entertainment and expression of concern for that which concerns men so closely, so vitally? Instead of being astonished that it *should sometimes exist*, is not *this* the wonder, that it *should ever be wanting*? Is it not *most strange*, that a spiritual, immortal, accountable being—with eternity before him—with an undying soul still in peril—with unpardoned sin resting condemnably upon him—and judgment staring him in the face—should be *free from anxiety*? Surely *this* is the mystery in the case, past finding out; and when he awakes, and is aroused from this slumber of indifference—when he perceives his danger—when “a horror of great spiritual darkness comes upon him,” and he is “sore afraid,” because of the just displeasure of “Him who is able to cast both soul and body into hell”—*then* is it that he first begins to “come to himself”—then for the first, does he feel and act as a reasonable being, so situated, ought to *feel and act*. His concern, his *dread*, if the term be preferred, argues just perceptions of the mind, but no unworthy quailing of the spirit.

“What man dares do, *he* dares.”

“He *who* does more, is none.”

Let the dreamers and the madmen of a scoffing world turn their pity from him to themselves, and wonder and weep at the thought of their own infatuation and carelessness!

A deep anxiety for the final welfare of the soul is, then, both natural and becoming. That it is occasionally felt and displayed, may be assumed as a fact. In ordinary cases, the exhibition is not striking. Individuals feel the burden of spiritual anxiety, but say little to the world, and at last, quietly, in the ordinary process of grace, in the humble use of appointed means, are delivered from its weight, and because the cases occur singly and privately, they are but little noted. Sometimes, however, the influence seems more diffusible. It is extended through the medium of the tender affections and relationships of life. From an individual in the family circle, as from a centre of impulse, it extends itself to all within that circle. Thence moving onward, it at last pervades a whole Church, a whole community; and, provided the influence be genuine and wholesome, it matters little to the argument and the result, whether it comes directly and wholly from a more general effusion of the Divine Spirit, or is partially propagated through the medium of the sympathetic principle, the social feelings; because, in either case *it is of God*. The writer is no stranger, and, he must add, no friend to the common *perversions* of the terms he has employed, nor to the *popular*

*abuse of the whole doctrine as well as practice of social religious impulse.* He expressly disavows all intention of commending those reputed examples of general religious impulse with which the press has teemed, and over the desolation caused by which the Church has wept, and still must weep. Yet he cannot consent, because of these, to deny or conceal the fact, that sometimes an overawing sense of God and of sacred things, so far from being confined to individuals, pervades whole associations of men, civilly or religiously connected.\* He would pity that pastor who has never been cheered in his work, by observing among the people of his charge an unwonted and almost general seriousness of mind and softness of heart—he would marvel at him who did not desire and rejoice in it—he could not but condemn him who should ridicule or obstruct it.† Still, it is believed

\* “That at any time, and in any country, in the course of Providence, there may be circumstances producing a more than common attention to the momentous truths of eternity, is what cannot be doubted of, by any informed of the transactions of past ages; especially as they have a bearing on the concerns of the Christian Church.”—*Bishop White’s Charge on Revivals.*

† “On every occasion of an extensive sensibility of this description, there is brought a heavy responsibility on the consciences of the ministers of the Gospel; who ought, of all men, to be the most cautious of making light of a serious concern for the things of eternity; and yet of countenancing extravagancies, which not only bring the subject into contempt, but in general maintain only a short-lived influence over the persons on whom they act.”—*Ibid.*

that instances of wholesome general concern are less frequent than is commonly imagined, and that *they are not to be viewed as causeless, or perfectly arbitrary on the part of God; but*, when they occur, may usually be traced to marked providential dispensations, or to a more diligent use of common appointed means of grace. Your business and mine, however, my readers, is with that which is *individual*, rather than general! And may you individually think it no scorn to have a reasonable concern for a spirit which cannot die, and a state which can never end!

Note, now, *the ordinary expedients, or actings, of those whose hearts for the first are touched.*

These all contemplate either *escape* or *relief*. Some, as we have hinted, hide their sorrows, as they previously did the sins which caused them, in their own bosoms. Others endeavour to pluck out the arrows of conviction, only to find that their barbed points may not be withdrawn, and that to move them, is to wound more deeply. Some flutter about in helpless indecision of purpose, and impotence of effort. Others are roused to a keener hatred against the truth, a more determined "fighting against God." They close their Bibles, forsake the sanctuary, abjure the mercy-seat. Some fly to pleasure, and "prove themselves with mirth"—others rush into untempered excess and reckless profligacy. While my pen traces these lines, the recollection flashes across my

mind, of one, now a consistent follower of Christ, and an ornament to his Church, who, in the first agony of a wounded conscience, in the first madness of his rebelliousness against God, did violence to his innate delicacy of feeling, burst from his long cherished habits of moral purity, and took part in abominations which his soul detested with loathing. In some resistance is brief; in others it is protracted. In some it readily yields to grace; in others it defies grace, quenches the spirit, and leads on to a reprobate mind. And, blessed be God, there are some, and those not few in number, who are content "to be drawn with the cords of love"—content that "the love of Christ should constrain them"—who, when they are smitten of God, repair unto Him, and say in their hearts, "He hath wounded, and he also will heal"—who love the word of truth that has caused them to hate themselves and their sins—who hear it the more gladly, and follow it devotedly—and who carry their sins, their sorrows, and their fears, to the foot of the cross, there to hear the comfortable words, "thy sins are forgiven thee!" It was needless to say, *that their expedient is the best.*

Yet a word, in reference to *the treatment* which this state requires. That treatment must be prudent and guarded. We have already remarked, that when industriously concealed, it *preys* upon the soul in secret. On the other hand,

it brooks not a rash and glaring exposure to the public eye. It is *too sacred* to be made the *sport of every tongue*. How impolitic, then, and how repugnant to natural delicacy, and to the shrinking sensitiveness which belongs to first convictions, is the modern popular plan of organizing those who are its subjects *into classes*, of addressing them *collectively*, and of assigning to them particular and prominent seats in "the great congregation," thus making them "a spectacle unto men," "a derision to the scoffers!" The writer only wonders, that to such *an exhibition*, any mind, rightly constituted, could submit; and he feels as though any concern how genuine or deep soever, must be dissipated under the glare of such exposure, and all singleness of heart before God, be changed into the desire "to be seen and heard of men." To the bosom of friendship, to the heart of affection, it may be confined; yet even theirs is not always the privilege to sooth it with effect, to direct it aright. *Few indeed* are qualified "to minister to the mind diseased;" and these few, are such as have felt the pangs they would assuage, who have had personal experience in "the things of God." But the best adviser, better than all on earth, is the GREAT PHYSICIAN, the PHYSICIAN OF SOULS,

## CHAPTER IV.

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### THE BROKEN AND CONTRITE HEART.

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- “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.”
- “Now I rejoice not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance.”
- “For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation, not to be repented of—but the sorrow of the world worketh death.”
- “For behold the self-same thing that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge!”

SPIRITUAL sorrow naturally follows in the train of *spiritual concern*. The religiously anxious mind usually leads to “*the broken spirit—the broken and contrite heart.*” He who seriously reflects on the serious topics connected with his eternal state, will find cause to *mourn for the sins of his present state*. And he who mourns aright for sin, will have his heart broken to “repentance not to be repented of.”

The terms which form the title of this chapter are highly figurative, and beautifully expressive. Like others which have been noted, they are drawn from the consideration of the natural or fleshly heart. Let us analyze them, that we may perceive their significanty, and correctly understand the state which they were meant to designate.

The expression, "a broken and a contrite heart," immediately suggests to us the idea of force applied. That force, as we shall presently show, is a *moral force*—the force of *moral, motive, and appeal*—the stroke of God's word and spirit upon the heart and conscience of man.

The terms further imply, a state of *pain and suffering*; and such is that state of spiritual feeling which they were intended to describe. The word *broken*, when applied to the body, is always associated with the idea of much physical suffering; but in its connexion with the spirit, the heart, this signification is deepened. The "*broken heart*" points out that extremity of anguish, beyond which nature, unable to endure, *dies*. The word *contrite* is so generally understood in its secondary and figurative sense, as synonymous with *penitent*, that we have almost lost sight of its *original* meaning, which is, *bruised and rubbed together*. In this sense it is here used; the heart is *broken* or *crushed*; and its wounded parts are painfully brought into collision, and rubbed as it



were together. These terms then point out *the extreme of anguish*, and precisely that kind of anguish which is felt by the convinced soul. Its sorrow is indeed keen and sharp; and sensitive as it is to every impression, there is a constant *chafing* or *trituration* of its wounded surface, which is correctly pronounced, a *state of contrition*.

There is another idea fitly conveyed by these terms—that of *lowliness and self-humiliation*.

When the pride of the heart is crushed and broken, and the resistance against God is at an end, then there comes to the natural man, *the feeling of defeat*, and the *unwonted spirit of submission*: and thence the Septuagint and some Latin versions, instead of the contrite heart, pronounce it *the humbled or lowly heart*. *Humiliation* then, is another characteristic of the state of him who “has fallen upon the stone laid in Zion,” until his obstinacy is broken in pieces, or on whom it has fallen with all its weight of evidence and motive, until it may be said to have “ground him to powder.”

I am aware, that by some it is deemed a very easy thing to slip quietly out of non-profession into the cold decencies of a *worldly* profession of a Gospel that is *not worldly*; that very little of *feeling* is deemed requisite or proper—that the calculating assent of the understanding, and a *vague* impression of some *obligation* to a religious

life, and a *quiet chilling sense of propriety* in the matter, are deemed amply sufficient as an introduction to the Christian life and to the Christian Church, without any heart-rending sorrow for sin, any thing that could at all, even by hyperbole, be termed a *contrition* of the *broken spirit*; nay, that there are some by whom it would be deemed either hypocrisy or enthusiasm, to speak of *excruciating* exercises—availing to “the rending asunder of soul and spirit, of the joints and the marrow.” With such, *the act* of profession is *all in all*; although it may well be doubted, whether in their case, profession either furthers or evinces any moral or spiritual change whatsoever; and whether they are not *virtually the same* in the temper and disposition of their minds—and the same in the sight of God, except the guilt in his esteem, of callousness to that which should touch and move the inmost soul, and of an unmeaning sporting with sacred names, sacred vows, and binding duties. In opposition to any such cool and phlegmatic entrance upon a Christian profession, in which there is but *little of regret*, far less of *sorrow*, felt or expressed for the wasted and ungodly past, and little of holy determination for the future that should be redeemed, the “*broken and contrite heart*,” my readers, must ever be regarded as an indispensable item in all genuine Christian experience, as the dividing point between the carelessness of irreligion in

He that breaks, "binds up the broken-hearted." "Troubled on every side, yet not for ever distressed; persecuted, but not forsaken; perplexed, but not in despair; cast down, but not destroyed;" the believer comes forth from the fiery trial of his spiritual sorrows, with less of the dross of earth, and more of the purity and brightness of heaven. Every trial to him has its value, every stroke is a stroke of mercy, every tear cleanses as it flows. The broken and contrite heart is to him the pledge of a saved soul, of heaven in reversion; for, "*a broken contrite heart, God will not despise.*"

Such was the sure conviction of the pious psalmist; and in this conviction, we, under the fuller light which the Gospel has thrown upon the whole subject of pardon and acceptance, cannot but unite. Without ascribing to *the mere act of contrition*, any propitiatory influence, any inherent power to put away sin, and to purchase acceptance—it is still consonant with all our natural ideas of the divine character, as well as with God's own solemn assurances, to suppose that this act or state will not *by him be overlooked*. If he himself hate sin, then assuredly there must be in him more of complacency towards man, when he also hates and abhors his sins, than when he retains and glories in them; the *penitent* must be more acceptable than the *profligate*. Reason therefore seems to anticipate those express declarations, which, as though to make assurance doubly

sure, God has graciously given. "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up." "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted." "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." "Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy; to this man will I look; even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word!" Of the truth of these assurances, there is a sure and blessed witness in the spiritual mourner's own breast—in the light that breaks in upon his darkness—in the hope that ever and anon suggests itself to him amidst his doubts—in the preference which he gives, and the tenacity with which he clings to his spiritual sorrow, rather than to his former joys in his sin, to which he would not return, even if he might—and, when the tempest of his soul has been stilled to rest, by Him who only hath power to say, "*Peace, be still;*" then, the quietude and joyfulness of his emancipated spirit, "the peace within him passing all understanding," *this, this*, is God's own witness to him, that "the broken and contrite heart," will not be despised!

It is not intended here to go over the hackneyed ground of the whole wide subject of repentance. Where all are perfectly familiar with scenery, its description is unnecessary. The *necessity* of repentance is therefore assumed as *granted for the present*, because it follows necessarily from our

condition as sinners, and from the reasonable, as well as scripturally declared fact, that "without holiness no man can see God," and the almost synonymous truth, "that except we repent, we shall all *inevitably perish*."

There are, however, some points that should briefly claim our attention—the *position of repentance in regard to faith—the mode by which the heart is broken to repentance—and the evidences of this state*.

I. As to the position of repentance in regard to faith.

There has been a difference among different writers, as to priority in time, and precedence in influence, between these two acknowledged essentials of a truly Christian state. Perhaps this point, not definitely settled of God, has been too dogmatically treated by men, without sufficient data, on the ground merely of their own limited experience. It may well be doubted, whether repentance and faith ever stand in the relation of *cause and effect*, and whether there is absolute uniformity as to the order in which they occur. Scripture itself seems in different places to *speak differently* on the subject, and the discrepancy in individual sentiment may perhaps originate from an exclusive regard to *individual* passages, without the comparison of Scripture with Scripture. Thus in one case, in answer to the inquiry what must be done to be saved, it is stated,

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved:" repentance not even being mentioned; while, on another occasion, the answer to the very same question is, "Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out," faith in the Redeemer being left to be inferred by the auditors to whom its necessity had been so boldly and thoroughly preached. Yet there is no contradiction in the directions given. In each case respectively, the direction went to the point of special and most pressing requirement in the hearer, and the duty not *expressly* stated, was in each case tacitly understood. This seeming vagueness of the oracles of God, was not without its design. It was intended to correspond with actual experience, and to be as comprehensive as the *range of facts in the case*. Experience, it is believed, would warrant the assertion, that in some cases *repentance precedes faith, while in others faith moves to repentance*. The conviction of sin is perhaps strong, the sorrow for it deep, the heart "broken and contrite," before as yet there is heard or realized the comfortable truth, the glad tidings, that there is a propitiation for sin—a Prince and a Saviour to give remission for sin—one specially appointed of God, to "bind up the broken hearted." Here it is evidently the feeling of the guilt of sin, and the sorrow felt for its commission, that lead men to inquire and ascertain *who or what shall atone*

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for sin, and thus direct them "to the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world." Repentance, in these cases, precedes faith, and faith again takes away the bitterness, while it secures the evangelical completeness and efficacy of repentance. Again, the order seems to be reversed. *A lively view of Christ* in his gracious and redeeming character, strikes the eye, and leads captive the amazed soul of him who has never yet felt "the plague of his own heart," the heinousness of his own sin. Faith in the Saviour first awakens to a sense of the need of the Saviour. It is the "goodness of God," as evinced in the Gospel of his Son, which leadeth to repentance; while again repentance causes that Gospel to be most fully and affectingly realized. All that need to be said, is, that both are essential, that their order may vary, but that neither can be wanting to genuine conversion—that they act and re-act upon each other, penitence deepening faith, while faith provokes to repentance; and that by the united influences of both, the soul is cleansed and prepared for the presence of Him into whose presence "entereth nothing that is unholy or unclean."

*How then does the heart, naturally hard and flinty, become broken and contrite?*

The very expression implies *an agent*, and *that agent is God*: for this *breaking* of the hard and stony heart, is a part of the process by which he

accomplishes that striking promise of his word, "I will take away the heart of stone, and give an heart of flesh." Yet here he works not arbitrarily, or with compulsory force, but through the medium of moral influences, and moral suasion, gently securing the acquiescence and co-operation of man himself. Among the means of influence, *his own word*, seconded by *his good Spirit*, is the most common and the most effective. In reference to it, well was it asked by the prophet, "Is not thy word as a fire, and as a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?" The analogy correctly and forcibly describes the power of the *agent*, but the inference must not be drawn that there is equal passiveness, and necessary subjection to change in the *object*; for as that object is spirit, and not matter, and in itself endued with the power of moral agency, mechanical and irresistible influence upon it, is out of the question. Acknowledging God as the giver of the grace of repentance, and his word as sufficient to *break* the *stubborn*, or *melt* the *icy* heart, it is still not ascribing too much to man, to assert that the probability of being moved to genuine contrition, may be either increased or diminished, and the day of repentance either accelerated or retarded, by the state of mind and feeling which is deliberately cherished, and the course of thought, effort, and action that are rendered habitual. If the reader has borne in mind the remarks made in reference



to the attainment of "The honest and good heart," he will readily apply them *here*; and he will justly conclude, that while the *agency of God does not excuse man from action*, the call to *human effort*, on the other hand, intends *no unworthy reliance on human strength*, and neither *denies nor disparages the converting grace of God*. Waiving all controversy on the subject, the author would fain present the wholesome and scriptural truth, that "*the broken and contrite heart,*" *must be sought and expected from God*, in immediate connexion with the practical question; to be addressed by every one to his own heart: Am *I* pursuing such trains of habitual reflection, and such courses of moral discipline, as would naturally tend to humble me before God, and to make me a mourner for sin? or am I not striving against conviction, and encouraging myself in impenitence? And may each one so "judge himself" in this important point, "that he be not judged of the Lord."

In the sense here affixed to "the broken and contrite heart," it will be evident, that *it is a state which will be but once experienced*. It is a part then of that *great change*, by which "the power of sin and Satan" is destroyed, and the kingdom of God established in the soul, and like it, admits not of repetition. It is connected with the *one great "repentance which is unto life, and therefore never to be repented of."* Yet in a lower sense, the terms admit of frequent application to

the state of the same individual. Even the *renewed believer*, whose heart has been once thoroughly *broken and bound up*, may, (in the language of one of our Articles,) “depart from grace given, and fall into sin; and by the grace of God (he may) arise again and amend his life.” There is *no man that liveth and sinneth not*: and even “the good man falleth sometimes seven times a day.” These occasional lapses call for regrets and humiliation. Acts of sin require acts of contrition, and penitence must of necessity be a grace in frequent exercise, until death shall terminate the warfare of sin; and this modified and partial repentance, demanded by partial returns to sin, is as essential to the safety and the comfort of the renewed, as is conversion to the unrenewed; and he perhaps comes nearest to the mark of Christian requirement, who best preserves the tenderness and sensitiveness of conscience, *and who is deeply pained and deeply* humbled even by the daily little infirmities which mar the beauty of his Christian holiness. These infirmities will give even to him some share in the exercises of the broken and contrite heart, and as he “goes mourning by reason of his sin,” and “walking humbly with his God,” there will be comfort in the promise that this broken and contrite heart God will *not* despise.

*The evidences of repentance* scarcely require to be stated. They are furnished by “bringing

forth the fruits meet for repentance." Being wholly practical in their nature, they can never be given in the case of what is usually termed a death-bed repentance; and it is the necessary want of them which attaches to such repentance so much of uncertainty and painfulness, such partially blended yet ever conflicting emotions of *hope and fear*. The new heart and the new life must attest that the heart has *been broken* to repentance. Hatred and abandonment of sin are not to be misconstrued, and to all, therefore, whose penitence has been genuine, we can say in the expressive and eloquent language of the apostle, (language which in every case will furnish an admirable test of genuineness:) "For behold this self-same thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge!"

## CHAPTER V.

## THE BROKEN HEART BOUND UP.

“He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds.”

“He hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted—to appoint to them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.”

“Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee.”

THE God of wisdom and of mercy has admirably tempered together the elements of the moral and natural world. The balance of power, the balance of “good and evil,” has been nicely preserved. He has set “one thing also against the other:” and they only have correct apprehensions either of *his* dealings, or of *our* state, who follow those dealings throughout, to their ultimate issue, and who view that state in all its stages of discipline. Sinful and depraved as we were by nature, spiritual sorrow, even to the very *breaking of the heart*, was necessary to our moral renovation. It was a painful and a bitter remedy, which he who knew our frame, and understood well our malady and its danger, knew to be necessary to

our recovery to spiritual health. Hard thoughts both of the providence and the grace of God, might naturally arise, did we view the act of contrition, in its painfulness and misery, without reference to its alleviations and its consequents. The Most High might be deemed a *stern Father* and "*a hard Master*," in permitting his earthly children to sorrow thus *deeply*, even though it were "after a godly sort," especially if he permitted us to sorrow "as those without hope," and to go mourning to our graves. But this *is not so*. He calls and causes us spiritually to sorrow and to suffer, "not for his pleasure, but for our profit, that we may be made partakers of his holiness." And while the ultimate benefit of the discipline is ours, all the alleviations of which it is susceptible are from *him*, and as soon as the effect is produced, by him it is brought to a close. For purposes of infinite mercy, for the acceptance and salvation of our souls, he causes the heart to *become broken and contrite*; but he leaves it not in its dismemberment and anguish. With an especial reference to its condition, he hath issued a commission to *One*, to "bind up this broken heart." He has provided an *Almighty Physician*, infinite in wisdom, consummate in skill, and unrestricted in power. Let us then, alike for the just appreciation of his character, and the encouragement of our own hopes, follow him in his works of mercy, as "*he goes about doing good*," and see with

how firm and yet gentle a ligature he binds up the broken in heart, and how soothingly he pours into them the oil of consolation.

It is *perfectly evident*, that this act of signal mercy is a *divine act*. Men were confessedly inadequate to its performance. They may be employed as the subordinate agents, in the minor processes of the accomplishment; but "the excellency of the power is of God," not of man; and when men are employed instrumentally, they are but as "the earthen vessels" which bear the Gospel treasure of consolation. The treasure itself is from heaven.

*Again and again* has the trial been made by earthly men and earthly means, to bind up the *broken in heart*. The spiritual mourner has been earnestly dissuaded from going to God and the Saviour; with the assurance, that He and his Gospel, having at the first caused, would now aggravate his misery, would tear open and inflame, rather than heal the wounds of the spirit. Without reference to God and to eternal things, the balm of human sympathy has been applied, the lethean opiate of worldly unconcern has been administered. Art has exhausted its ingenuity, and pleasure has tried all its blandishments. There has been the shifting scenery of mimic life, and the dance with its giddy mazes, and "*the tabret*, and *the viol*, and *the harp*, and *the wine*, have been in their feasts." But the mourner has still

been desolate within. "The charmer," has not been heard, or heard in vain, though he charmed "never so wisely." The soul has turned in loathing and disgust from this trifling with its misery. It has felt that the amusements of a vain and trifling world were an insult to its dignity, and a mockery of its sacred griefs. It has been ready to say with the wise man of Israel, "as vinegar upon nitre, so is he that singeth songs to an heavy heart;" or with the mourning captive by the waters of Babylon—"They required of me a song and mirth in my heaviness." Philosophy too has tried her skill. Professing to know the whole economy of mind and spirit, she has deemed herself competent to relieve all the wants, and heal all the wounds, of mind and spirit. But her trust and her boast have been vain. In the moment of agony, all the ligatures which she has bound around the ruptured spirit have been snapped as easily as fragile withs in a giants hand, and the wound has bled afresh, and no styptic known to her art, or the art of man, could staunch the flow. That however which was impossible with men, was possible *with God*. Where human agency has failed, *his* becomes conspicuous: he condescends himself to "heal those who are broken in heart, and to *give medicine to heal their sickness.*" In this passage, it would seem as though the Father were the agent in this work of compassion. *Again*, the Son, by the voice of the prophet,

speaks of it as delegated to *Him*; "He hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted;" while it would again seem to come specially within the province of *the Spirit*, who is emphatically the *Comforter*, and to whom it appertains, not merely "to convince of sin," but to give "everlasting consolation and a good hope through grace. It may justly, therefore, be regarded as the work of the *triune God*, effected through the mission and death of the *Son*, and the special agency of the *Holy Spirit*, to the good pleasure of the Father.

*How it is effected*, is both an important and an interesting inquiry. Evidently it is not by any sudden and arbitrary act of Omnipotence. The whole analogy of divine influence asserts the contrary. It is rather in compliance with the previous prayer of the sufferer, and through the instrumentality of simple means used in faith, which had been devised and prescribed by the Almighty Physician. I cannot but consider the whole course of the Saviour's merciful and curative administration to the bodies and the souls of men, during his earthly ministry, not only as the narrative of *undoubted facts*, but of undoubted facts which were meant to illustrate the usual economy of his grace to all the "weary and heavy laden," all the *broken hearted of the earth in all ages*.

When he ministered on earth to the diseased in body or in mind, they were either brought, or came unto him *in faith*; and this faith it was



which saved them: and even it saved them through the influence of means; means, simple in themselves, but mighty through the power of God. As, under the Old Testament dispensation, the proud Syrian was required to "go wash in Jordan seven times, that his leprosy might depart, and his flesh come unto him again, as the flesh of a little child," even so, in the Saviour's day, "the blinded eyes" were to be anointed with the clay, that they might see, and the "withered hand" was to be stretched out that it might be restored. And so, in the case now under consideration, the broken heart, in its very dismemberment and agony, must perform an act of faith; and looking unto him, who is mighty to heal, must exclaim, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me whole."

The hand that binds up, is then *divine*: but the cords are the cords of earth, and "the bands as it were the bands of a man." Things which before were lightly esteemed, seem to have been visited, as by an angel, who "troubled" only to bless, to have an unction from the Holy One, an infusion of celestial grace. The consolation that assuages grief comes through "the foolishness of preaching." The written word, that "dead letter" to the natural mind and unmortified heart, seems full of life, and conveys a new life, because a new hope, to this broken spirit. Its promises, "yea and amen in Christ Jesus the Lord," speak *peace*, sweetly yet authoritatively, to the bosom

that lately was "like the troubled sea when it cannot rest." *Spiritual influence*, derided as the cant of the hypocrite, the phantasy of enthusiasm, approves itself as a blessed reality: and, unseen of mortal eyes, works its works of mercy in secret. By it, most of all, are the broken and severed parts re-united, and the wounds within healed, and the whole soul consecrated unto God, and made to *rejoice* in his service; and "the oil of joy given for mourning, and the garments of praise for the spirit of heaviness." *Ordinances*, become something more than mere formalities, idle ceremonies. They become the *seals* and *pledges* of divine mercy, and of our forgiveness. In *prayer*, public and private, how is the lately agonized soul lifted up above its sorrows and its sins, towards the purity, the peace, the blessedness of heaven! and how does this saintly exercise seem to place before us that "ladder whose foot is on earth, and whose top reacheth to the heavens," so that the angels of God, ascending and descending thereon, may bear up our petitions and return to us "with healing in their wings." And in the *eucharist*; but of that I will not speak; it is rather the exalted privilege, the peculiar thank-offering of him whom God has already visited in mercy, whose "broken heart" the Saviour has already "bound up," who has already found "*joy and peace in believing*," than one of the means by which it is sought. He goes to the altar of God, "of God

his exceeding joy," not to seek for rest and healing to his spirit, but to thank the God of his salvation that "He hath done all things well," saying in his rejoicing heart, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord." And to him, thus coming, the ordinance seems the solemn sealing of the covenant of mercy which had been already established. It adds the last drop to that cup of spiritual joy, which is already full to running over.

"The broken heart is bound up" then, not by any single and marked act of divine interposition, but through the medium of appointed agencies, by a blessing upon the ordinary means of grace, and the gentle breathings of the Spirit the Comforter. It is generally a *gradual* not an *instantaneous* process. The work of spiritual healing goes slowly on; and even when it is completed, the soul usually has her wounds and her misery, "the wormwood and the gall" of her contrition long in remembrance, and therefore is humbled within us. We would not exclude individual exceptions, but the instantaneous transition from the bitterness of the broken heart, "to joy and peace," nay, even to transport in believing, is contrary to all analogy, natural and spiritual—contrary to general experience, and often, it is to be feared, a mere delusion of the imagination.

Neither does that communication, or rather

sense of pardon and acceptance which serves to bind up the broken-hearted, come as a new and special revelation to the individual soul, distinct from God's general revelation to our fallen race. There is no private and specific assurance made to beam forth from the heavens, sudden as the lightnings flash, and like the voice heard of Paul, addressed to the believer and none beside. On the contrary, it comes through God's prior and all-sufficient revelation. "His promises are received as they are *generally* set forth in Holy Scripture." *Faith* appropriates them to the comfort of the individual heart. It reads "the record which God hath given of his Son"—of propitiation through his blood to all the penitent and believing. It receives this as a faithful saying, which is brought home and applied through the agency of God's Spirit, **AND ALL IS WELL.**

The idea of a *special assurance* miraculously conveyed, independently of the *written word of promise*, and of the general grace of the spirit of promise, we believe to be wholly unwarranted in Scripture,\* and fraught with no ordinary danger

\* The writer is well aware that scriptural evidence is professedly alleged for the doctrine. It belongs not to a work like this to test its character and bearing. One of the most generally quoted texts is Romans viii. 16. "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirits, that we are the children of God." The interpretation of M'Knight is here worthy of regard. "Also, the Spirit itself, bestowed on us

to the souls of men. The common danger to be feared from it would be the substitution of *inward feeling*, which is always liable to be mistaken, and subject even in the best to strange and uncontrollable vascillation, in the place of the testimony of *facts* and of Scripture, as a test of Christian character and spiritual safety; and the reliance upon this uncertain fluctuating feeling would very differently, although in each case injuriously affect two opposite classes—the *presuming* and the *timid*. It would lead the one to increased hardihood of presumption on the mercy

in his extraordinary operations, bears witness along with the filial dispositions of our own minds, that we are the children of God." And to show his opinion still more clearly, after having remarked that some wished to interpret it, "the Spirit beareth witness to our spirit, instead of *with* our spirit," he adds, "that this interpretation will make no alteration in the sense, provided by the Spirit's witness we do not understand a particular revelation to individuals; but the common witness which the Spirit bears by producing filial dispositions in the hearts of the faithful." In accordance with this it is remarked by the venerable Bishop White, "What the miraculous effusion of the Holy Spirit was to the infant Church, the authentic record of that effusion, and other evidences of Christianity are to believers of the present day. When there is the consent of the possession of Christian graces with the requisitions of the word of God, then there is the joint evidence recognised in the passage. Any other species of assurance may be the result of *animal sensibility*."—Bishop White's Lectures on the Catechism, diss. iii. sec. 2. to which the reader is referred for many valuable remarks on the forgiveness of sin, and its evidences.

of God and the safety of their own state, not from the evidence of the *new heart* and the *new life*, but on the mere warrant of an inward persuasion of safety, which persuasion originates in some supposed *assurance* believed to have been received, and which fancied *assurance* again was perhaps some momentary ebullition of feeling—some sudden transport of joy—some powerful view of Christian truth and Christian privilege converted by the force of an excited imagination into a special token of acceptance from the Father of *light and life*—the whole matter in their case being a mere bubble which folly and vanity had inflated, and the whole hope, “the hope of the hypocrite, which shall perish.”

Serving thus to perpetuate the self-deception of the bold and confident, it would naturally operate as a source of poignant distress to many humble and penitent believers, whose peculiar temperament inclined them to despondence and fear. Believing this *special token of forgiveness* to be essential to their safety, and aware that it has never been vouchsafed to them, too little under the influence of enthusiasm to fancy its reception, and too *sincere* to feign it, however justly entitled to the promises of God, however pointedly addressed by the word of God in the language of encouragement and consolation, however abounding in the work of the Lord, and rich in the graces of his Spirit, yet, through lack of this imagined inward

testimony, they may for years be a prey to doubt and apprehension, and at last go mourning to their graves. Such are those "bruised reeds" which the compassionate Redeemer would not have "broken," the "smoking flax" which he designed not "to quench," "the weary and heavy laden" whom he has invited to himself for rest and refreshment; but alas! the perverted opinions of men, shut up to them every avenue of comfort; and the want of an evidence which is neither promised nor given, causes them lightly to esteem those other proofs of safety and guarantees of pardon, which would otherwise have applied a healing balm to their wounded spirits.

It is not intended here to enter at length into the merits of this doctrine of private assurance, but we would remark, that it bears about it *prima facie* evidence of inconsistency and error. It must either suppose the unchangeableness of man, or else require frequent repetition, or otherwise assert the absolute indifference of Deity to human action. If it supposes the believer to be unchangeable, it is contradicted by his own private consciousness and by common experience. If on the contrary an unfavourable change be admitted as possible in him, then that change must cancel his bond of assurance. Made to him in a state of grace, it could avail him nothing in a state of apostacy or sin; and even partial declensions would shake his confidence in its validity; and if,

on the third supposition, it presumes *him* to have lapsed, while his *assurance remains firm*, and his *title good*, then, beyond controversy, God “discerneth not between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth him and him that serveth him not”—“God justifieth the wicked,” and *man* may be saved in his sins. The idea of this private assurance, then, necessarily involves that of *final and necessary perseverance*, with all its kindred delusions, and consequent dangers, or else, except in the rare, I might say the impossible case, of consciousness of absolute perfect identity of character, it is *nothing worth without renewal*. It either proves too much, by impugning the character of God, or it proves too little, and avails nothing to human comfort.

It would perhaps be going too far to assert, that God *may* not, to some favoured and much tried servants, in some great and sore “fight of affliction,” give some *private assurance* of approaching and certain salvation; it is only contended that it is not the *common* heritage of his servants, and that its reception is neither essential to personal comfort, to meetness for Christian ordinances, nor to final salvation.

*Nor again*, does our theory presume the Christian to be left for ever in a state of anxiety and doubt, without the possibility of arriving at a comfortable hope or trust of “acceptance in the Beloved.” On the contrary, hope, strong abiding



hope, is one of his special and highest privileges. "Joy and peace," not less than "love," are "fruits of the Spirit," heritages of the faithful. It is only contended, (and here is the point of difference,) that this hope or trust, which causes the penitent believer to "go on his way rejoicing," results from *the promises of God, from his own consciousness that he is within the terms on which they are made, and from the ordinary soothing influence of the Spirit, but not from an express private revelation.*

But waiving all prolonged discussion of the mere mode of communication, let us be content with the cheering and comfortable fact, that in God's own way, and in his good time, the sweet sense of pardon is realized—"a reasonable, religious, and holy hope," is indulged—there is lightness of spirit to him who was in heaviness—there is "joy unspeakable and full of glory," to him who mourned for sin—there is a sense of holy nearness to God, in him who before was "afar off"—there is a *filial spirit of confiding love* to him who had "suffered God's terrors with a distracted mind;" and when this spirit of adoption comes in its strength, and with its "perfect love, casteth out fear," then can the penitent exclaim, in the fresh flow of his gratitude and joy, "Abba Father;" for he feels that God is indeed his Father, his reconciled Father, and that *he is one of the sons of God*; and "if a son, then an

heir, an heir of God, and a joint heir with Christ."

And now, *what feelings* accompany or follow this *experience of healing*? Those of deep and reverential joy, rather than of high, giddy, and mad excitement. The joy of the heart is indeed too deep and too sacred to have its expressions loud. It is rather disposed to say to itself, and to all its livelier emotions, "Be still, and know that it is God." The sorrow and humiliation through which it has passed, the very death from which it has been raised, throw a chasteness over its gladness, and cause it "to rejoice with trembling." He who "has been saved so as by fire"—he who has escaped some sudden and imminent peril, he knows not how—he, who, from the languishment of a painful wound, or the bed of wasting disease and of anticipated death, has been restored to soundness and life; all these, if the mind and the heart have been duly exercised, feel more than they can express, and express what they can, not in noisy and extravagant professions, but in solemn words that come from the heart, and in acts that speak more than words. Thus should it be with the spiritually healed, the spiritually saved. Some indeed imagine themselves *compelled*, irresistibly prompted to louder and less sober demonstrations of their joy. It would be uncharitable to question the sincerity of their conviction, and cruel, even were it possible, to restrict

the mode of its manifestation. Be all Churches and individuals left to their conscience, their customs and their feelings in the matter ; the writer only asks for himself the liberty to indulge and to record his strong conviction, that the feelings which most naturally possess, and which best become *him* whose heart has been newly " bound up " by the hand of mercy, are those which would revolt from the " noise of the multitude," and the shout of triumph, and which would prompt him to muse in silence, or to praise with solemn awe.

Most affecting is the call, my readers, which is given by this binding up of the broken heart, for its subsequent unreserved dedication to him by whom it was healed. The praise of the lips is good in its place. It is the overflowing of the too full heart ; but that heart itself feels that it is an inadequate return for unspeakable mercy. " *A wounded spirit, who can bear ?*" Of a *healed* spirit what shall bound the gratitude ? He who gives less than " the heart " which is bound up, less than himself, gives nothing ; and to that man I confidently predict a return to sin, a renewal of sorrow, " an end that shall be worse than the beginning."

By this time, it is trusted, that the reader will have contracted a sort of personal and friendly interest in the welfare of him whom he has followed through such marked and striking changes, and with whom he has seen God thus wondrously

dealing. Having seen him in his sins, felt for him in his spiritual sorrows, rejoiced with him when those sorrows were soothed to rest, and listened to him with delight when he exclaimed, "the offering of a free heart will I give unto thee, O, my God," let me ask him to accompany him further, and to look upon him in the joy and purity of his last and best estate, his highest and noblest character, as "a new creature,"—a servant of Christ—a man of God.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE NEW HEART—THE NEW MAN.

- “ Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.”
- “ I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh.”
- “ That ye put off concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.”
- “ If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.”
- “ In Christ Jesus, neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.”

**THESE** declarations cannot be explained away. They evidently mean something, and something moreover that is important. Their reference is as evident as their import is marked. It is to the actual experience and blessed effects of that *spiritual change*, the indications and preparatory stages of which have already been exhibited. A subject more important could scarcely be presented to human consideration; may its intrinsic importance secure to it a candid perusal.

There has been, it is to be feared, a degree of vagueness and studied ambiguity in the manner of speaking and writing on this subject, which has tended to give equally vague and confused ideas. An air of mystery has been needlessly thrown around it, which has wholly deterred some inquirers, perplexed others, and laid the whole subject open to the derision of the scoffer. The well-disposed have been led to form extravagant expectations, never to be realized—the really converted have been prompted to doubt the sufficiency of their change—while the profane have freely indulged their wit at the expense of all who profess to have received this essential change, or who even accredit its reality. All this is to be regretted ; and the interests of genuine, vital religion, imperiously demand that the subject should be stripped of all known deception or delusion, of all extravagant description, and of all mystery not truly its own ; and that it should be treated no longer in the language of spiritual romance, but of plain, sober, Christian truth. The former may best serve to inflame the minds of the young and ardent, to delude the credulous, or to astonish the ignorant ; but the latter only can stand the test of fair examination, the test of time, and the more searching test of God's word, and of his final judgment. When we discard every thing which does not fairly belong to the subject, and, reining in imagination, “ speak only the words of truth

and soberness," we then take from the enemy, and the blasphemer, his most valued opportunities of annoyance. We thenceforth render the cause we are defending invulnerable to his attacks. His ridicule falls harmless from the buckler of truth; and facts, as they stand forth in the clear light of heaven, reflect upon all vain opposers shame and confusion of face.

*There is reality in the fact itself of a spiritual change:*

*There is mystery in the manner in which it is effected:*

*Its nature:*

*Its reality is taught by the Bible and the Church:*

*Its experience is necessary.*

These are points of vital importance, and worthy of mature consideration.

1. *There is reality in the fact of this spiritual change.*

Through the power of the Gospel of Christ, men may become "*new creatures*." Their moral renovation is such as to justify this strong figurative term. In *common* life, *when one is changed from sickness to health*, or when, according to the phraseology of the world, *he is reformed*, we say that *he is a new man*. In these cases, the world tolerates the expression, adopts it, and feels its force. There is no needless scepticism, and no idle merriment excited. Yet here

the term is far less founded in truth, far more figurative than in the Christian's case. *He*, changed from *spiritual* disease to spiritual health, and *reformed* not only in appearance and in act, but also in *heart*, may almost *literally* be pronounced a "*new creature*." His natural frame remains the same; but his spiritual fabrick has been a *second time created*. His *identity* remains; but his thoughts, desires, purposes, feelings, affections, habits, all are changed. The thing itself is a *fact*, supported by the only proper evidence of facts, experience and testimony. That she has wrought this wholesome and thorough change upon thousands and tens of thousands, Christianity fearlessly asserts in the open face of the world; and in proof of it, she is ready to summon *the world* as her witnesses. She throws out her assertion regardless of the gainsayer's cavils; simply saying, it is so, "my enemies themselves being judges."

There is a change which *the body* will undergo, and which, although still future, yet as made known to us in Scripture, furnishes a beautiful illustration of this spiritual new formation in Christ Jesus. It is THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY FROM THE REPOSE OF DEATH AND THE GRAVE. Now that resurrection will make believers, even as to their *bodies*, "*new creatures*." There will be a change, and yet identity will not be destroyed. Each man will have *his own*



tabernacle of flesh ; but how changed, how spiritualized, *how glorified !* Even so with *the soul*, during its connexion with the changing body. It “dies unto sin”—it “rises again in newness of life.” It is changed, yet the same. The believer is *personally* himself, but spiritually he is a *new creature* ; and his second, new, spiritual nature, as far exceeds in moral beauty *his former* nature, as will his *resurrection body* exceed in glory *that body* which he is now bearing to “corruption and *the worm.*”

This however is an analogy, drawn from distant and yet undeveloped, though still glorious realities. God has revealed *the fact, that this body*, “sown in weakness, shall be raised in power ; sown in dishonour, shall be raised in glory”—that “this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal immortality.” *Faith* may receive, and imagination may faintly sketch the promised transformation—but our eyes have not beheld it, and therefore it will not stand out in such boldness of relief and vividness of colouring as to enable us to *transfer* and *apply* what we have beheld, to the things of the inner man. Let us take then another illustration more palpable to our senses. By what it has done for *associated men*, judge of what the Gospel can do for *individual* man. Give individuality, body, spirit, life, to society ; and then, when the personification is complete, *when you* have before you one *body politic*, ani-

mated by its own appropriate spirit, then note the change which the Gospel causes to pass over that body and that spirit! How great, how glorious the change! How worthy the name of a *new creation*! It is immaterial whether the example be taken from a once heathen spot, visited and converted by the Gospel, or from one of those waste places within its own empire, where all had gone to decay and desolation, but which it again revives by its life-giving doctrines; in either case, the illustration is complete. Scarcely can you recognise ancient Britain, as described by its Roman visitors and conquerors, with its gallant, warlike, yet ferocious population, and its Druid superstitions, in the fair and happy isle that now smiles from the bosom of the sea, looking joyfully upon her fair heritage, and her favoured children at home, untiring in industry, unrivalled in the arts, distinguished in science, and, above all, guided by piety, and rich in the favour of the Lord; or, as she casts abroad her eye over the wide expanse of ocean, and sees the sails of her commerce spreading to the winds of heaven! Now, what, be it asked, has caused the change? Was it *science*, hand in hand with *civilization*? Nay, it was *the Gospel introducing both*. Had there been no Christian apostle to Britain—had her only priests been those who wandered among her majestic oaks, and revered their sacred parasite\*

\* The misletoe.

—had her only altars been the rude and blood-stained stones which idolatry had erected, and over which idolatry presided—not now had she been seen in the foremost rank of nations, and filling so large a space in the eye of the world, and fulfilling the important duties assigned her from on high! Her change from a Pagan to a Christian state, was at the commencement of her prosperity, and the light and joyousness of that prosperity have increased with the increasing diffusion of “the light of the everlasting Gospel.” Or to take another example, in which the entire change has passed as it were under our own eyes, and in which it may almost literally be said, that “a nation *has cast away their gods*,” and “been *born*” unto the Lord “*in a day*.” What change can be supposed more radical, more entire, than that which in our own day has transformed the rude, degraded, barbarous, and sensual idolaters of the Southern Pacific, into peaceful subjects of well ordered *human* governments, sitting securely each one “under his own vine and fig-tree,” with “none to make them afraid;” enjoying all the comforts and blessings of civilization; and into faithful subjects of “the Prince of Peace,” “the God of gods and King of kings?” Who can contrast the account of their pristine state, as given by the enterprising Cook and other early navigators—(who, alas! visited them from *Christian* realms, and under a Christian flag, but not in

a Christian spirit, or to leave among them the bland influences of the Christian Gospel, but rather to add a seemingly Christian sanction to Pagan licentiousness)—and that which is now borne to us by the swelling sails of every Christian bark that has touched at their friendly “haven of ships,” and which is so beautifully given in the simple, classic, Christian pages of a Stewart, and in the more ample details furnished by the able author of the “Polynesian Researches”—and not wonder within himself “if these things can indeed be so,” and be amazed at the super-human power of the Gospel over national customs and character? Nor is that power evinced only in the illumination and conversion of Pagan lands; it is equally displayed within the borders of Christendom itself. Wheresoever the institutions and ordinances of the Gospel fall into desuetude, and its faithful voice ceases to be heard, the civil community rapidly sinks in the scale of social excellence, and relapses into little less than *heathen ferocity and vice*. It becomes truly a “waste place,” bearing upon it every vestige of desolation and decay. “It is all overgrown with thorns, nettles have covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof is broken down.” But let that Gospel be again introduced, its altars set up, its ordinances observed, and its appointed Sabbaths hallowed by the voice of prayer and praise; there is then a new era in its local history; at once you

perceive order arising out of confusion—moral beauty out of moral deformity—regularity and decorum instead of disorder and profligacy—and, in a word, there is *life from the dead*. Here then we have unquestionable examples of social or national change. Through the converting influence of the Gospel, a whole people have a *new heart* given unto them, and display a *new life*. Their *identity* remains. The spot of their inheritance is still contained within the same geographical limits, it has the same latitude and longitude, they are still living under the same government perhaps, and virtually the same laws; their descent is the same, their national name and title is the same; but their national *character is wholly changed*; in spirit and in act they are a *new people*. Where then is the unreasonableness of supposing that it should do for *the parts*, what it has done for *the whole*; for the *individuals*, what it has wrought for the association which they form? Which is the greater mystery, that it should do good on a *great* scale, or on a *small*? to *the many*, or *the few*? Nay, does not its general and national influence necessarily pre-suppose a private and particular influence? Can you suppose a new heart and a new life to a *multitude*, unless there were a spiritual change to the *individuals* who compose that multitude? Can *national* conversion be conceived of separately from *individual* conversion? These questions, it is pre-

sumed, carry conviction with them, and place the doctrine of private individual conversion, through Gospel influence, beyond denial or dispute.

On another ground also, well may we ask "why it should be thought a thing incredible" that God should change the hearts of the children of men? He is continually changing matter through the medium of the laws which he has given to the universe, and which constitute the course of nature. We find the minds and dispositions of men continually undergoing change, although in a manner which excites no surprise, because experience has made us familiar with it, and because it apparently comes more in the way of nature, as a thing of course. The folly and sportiveness of *the child* are lost in the more manly vivacity of *the youth*, and that again sobers down into the ripeness and staidness of *maturity*, while that retrogrades towards the imbecility and the infirmities of a *second childhood*. Since the *mind*, then, with all its powers and affections, is as susceptible of change as the *body*, and equally subject to the operation of Deity, there is nothing peculiarly surprising, nay, nothing more than should be reasonably anticipated, in the fact of that great and abiding change, of which the Scriptures so unequivocally speak; a change from corruption to holiness, from darkness to light. We are not staggered at the idea of the *profane man* becoming *reverential*, or the *sensualist* pure, or

the *avaricious man liberal*. All this is perfectly possible, and if proper and sufficient motives are applied, perfectly natural, and actually attested by *observation*: and if such change or reversion be possible in some traits of character, why not in *all*; if through the force of moral motive, *characteristic vices* disappear, and the opposite *virtues* stand conspicuous in their place, may not the less marked evils be counteracted, and the less important deficiencies of character be supplied? If *one* principle or spring of action, and consequently the action itself, in the moral machinery can be changed and regulated, shall we suppose that God cannot touch, and alter, and regulate the *main spring* which *moves the whole*? If he can throw the healing salt into the separate streams of action, can it be thought impracticable that he should sweeten and purify the *fountain*, the *well spring itself*? And if the influence takes effect there, is it not evident that it must be pervading and effective throughout? And *does* not this influence, when it thus lays hold upon the human heart, and by its action there, rectifies and ennobles *all* the traits of character, produce that very *conversion* on which the *Scripture insists*, and which makes men, in deed and in truth, “new creatures” in Christ Jesus?

But in the *manner* in which this change is effected, there is always more or less of mystery. Sometimes it is mysterious throughout. We can

only wonder and adore: exclaiming, "This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes." At other times we see some of the links of the chain. God works by means, and those means, with their respective effects, are open to our observation. We see them contributing each its proper share to the good work of rescuing a son or "a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan had bound, lo! these many years"—to the saving an immortal soul, which had been drawing nigh to "the second death." We observe that "a word spoken in season" catches the attention on one side—that the Book of God, with its open and instructive page, allures on the other—that Christian counsel points to the way of peace, and Christian example goes before them in its course. Yet even in these cases there is still something wonderful and past finding out. Many things are perceived to work together for spiritual good; appropriate appeals made to reasonable and intelligent creatures, are seen to produce appropriate effects in furthering their spiritual conversion; but then, *the manner* in which all these means are tempered together and guided and applied—the mode in which God, "the Father of all spirits," addresses himself to their spirits, and disposes them to obedience—how, and with what spiritual organs they hear his "still small voice," and read that writing which his hand has traced, and which no eye but theirs can behold; this is the mystery; and this



mystery we must be content to leave such, until that time when we shall “understand all mystery and all knowledge.” *Honestly* then is it avowed that *mystery* belongs to the *manner* in which this change is produced; as it does also to many of the ordinary and apparently the simplest operations of nature; but the day has passed by, when the mysteriousness of a fact could be successfully urged against its *truth*, or when the narrow limits of human comprehension could be considered as bounding the range of the Divine efficiency.

What then is *the nature of this change, and in what does it consist?*

*It is not generally of sudden experience.* Rarely, perhaps never, does it convert, *as in a moment*, the atrocious sinner into the thorough saint. The principle of the spiritual life is first infused; it exists, and grows, and matures in its embryo state; it is then developed or displayed in the *new birth unto righteousness*; but even at that new birth the believer is but *a babe in Christ*, coming into the new and spiritual world in helplessness, and “weakness, and much trembling;” requiring “the sincere milk of the word, that he may grow thereby,” and obliged to pass by slow degrees, and through the various difficulties and dangers of childhood and youth, to the stature of a perfect man in Christ Jesus. This fact, that the Christian, although “born anew,” and beginning to “live unto God,” at a special time begins his

spiritual life in weakness and immaturity, takes away a part of the mystery and the edge of objection in the case, while it will be seen hereafter, that this acknowledgment or proviso does not at all countenance *that* assertion of progressiveness which would confound the change of the new heart with sanctification.

*Again:* Great as is this change, *it is not total*, so as to obliterate all vestiges of the former character. It does not take away either the human affections or the human infirmities of its subject. He is not converted from "a sinful *man*," into a *faultless angel of God*. Weakness and sin still cleave to him, and will continue to cleave to him while he is in the flesh. The original defects, and constitutional propensities of *the man*, will be seen through the superadded glory of *the Christian*. Occasionally, indeed, although rarely, through the rich "supply of the spirit of grace," and through much watchfulness and prayer on the part of the believer, as well as much diligence in the rectification and new formation of habit, the most rooted defects of the natural man will be extirpated, and the opposite graces implanted in their stead: more usually, however, the cast of character in the new man, bears some resemblance to that of "the old man;" the *temperament* remains the same; the constitutional tendencies exist, and ever and anon develop themselves, although grace gives strength to resist those which

are evil, and sanctifies and directs aright those which are excellent. Native defects of temper and disposition, will occasion the renewed man many struggles, many tears, and, possibly, some discomfitures; while native *energies*, consecrated unto God, will give nerve and vigour to spiritual action, and make that action effective for God. The meek and loving John, will be the meekest and most loving, and most dove-like of disciples, delighting to "lean upon" his Lord's breast, and speaking chiefly of the surpassing love of God to man, and of man to his brother man. The zealous and fiery Peter carries his warmth and intrepidity with him through his Christian life, until they lead him to the martyr's death. The ardent, enthusiastic, and indefatigable Paul, gives his heart, his labours, and his life to *the Gospel*, as freely and as devotedly as he once did *to the law*; and he who in zeal for the traditions of the fathers, outstripped all his fellows, was "in labours more abundant" than all, when he became the apostle of Christ, and the messenger of the Churches: and thus will it ever be in ordinary cases with the humbler subjects of *the grace of God*. Changed as they are, they still show what they *were*.

The change then, by which we become "*new creatures*," consists not in the *total* abolition of sin, for that is impracticable while we dwell in a *sinful world*, and must struggle with the indwelling

sin of our own heart, "the law of the members that wars against the law of the mind." It consists not in *never feeling* the incitement to evil, for then would probation be at an end, and faith would want its proper tests and trials; but it consists in the thorough hatred, the steady resistance, and the gradual conquest of sin; and in the implanted love and willing service of a once neglected God, a once contemned Saviour, a once spurned Spirit. "*The flesh*" may still be "*weak*," but in *this* is the change; that the *Spirit* is now *willing* to serve the God of its salvation; that "the desire of the soul is to him," and to his cause. The *principle* of action is a *new* principle, and the *course* of action is changed. The natural heart, which was "enmity against God," is succeeded by the *new heart*, which loves him supremely with a filial affection, and which serves him "gladly with a willing mind." Enough of corruption and perverseness still remains for the Christian to lament, for God to forgive, and for grace to change; but in *this* is his joy and his comfort, that he is *in* Christ and not *out* of him, "walking not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit," and therefore "not under condemnation."

It will be seen, then, that in this change, when soberly presented according to truth and fact, there is nothing to outrage probability, to provoke ridicule, to encourage undue complacency in its

subjects, or extravagant expectations in others. "The new man" feels in himself too surely the workings of corruption to dream of sinless perfection; and others, aware that changed though he be, he still is *man*, should not expect it from him.

Yet the change is such as to excite his lively joy, his fervent gratitude to him who hath called him with a holy calling. The world may misrepresent, the ungodly may sneer, but in his own heart the springs of joy are opened, pouring out an unfailing stream of refreshment, and none can dry them up. Feeling that he has, "through Christ strengthening him," achieved a partial victory over sin, and looking for its more complete subjugation, he exclaims with joy, "thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ!"

Such is the change of which the Scriptures speak with frequency and plainness, and which they describe under so many varied and striking images, that we are left to wonder at their richness and copiousness of illustration. To those who are familiar with their language, and who have imbibed their spirit, as well as experienced the change they describe, it must be matter of astonishment, that any who profess to receive them, however worldly in spirit or lax in doctrine, should treat the subject of conversion or renovation as a fabulous mystery, or an idle fancy. Yet *such* is the fact. The bare mention of it seems

to excite the spleen and malice of the carnal heart; while some, too indifferent even to be moved to anger on the subject, content themselves with the contemptuous expression, "What will these babblers say?" "Do they not speak parables?" And lest "a world lying in wickedness," and consequently in special need of renovation, might perchance receive God's testimony, the learning and ingenuity of *philosophical* Christians have put forth their most laboured, although not their most successful efforts, either to expunge this testimony from the charter of our faith, or to divest it of all its point and value. The process of *reduction* and abridgment has been fully and daringly tried by the disciples of this school. Their rage for *simplifying* has penetrated and dissipated all mystery, has rudely assailed all miracle, has wholly proscribed some of the most sacred verities of our holy faith, and has left us abundant reason to wonder that our blessed Lord and his evangelists and apostles should have taken so much time, and space, and pains, to communicate the few elementary and really very unimportant truths which, in their wisdom, they have found to constitute the pith or marrow of the Gospel. A doctrine so mysterious, so truly spiritual and evangelical, as that of the *transformation of the believer in heart and life* by the power of the Gospel, could scarcely be expected to escape with impunity. It has, therefore, been discarded with-

out ceremony, and disavowed without shame; and the Scripture itself has been brought in to bear evidence to its own pompousness of phraseology, by showing that the change which it has so eloquently and so variously described, was indeed scarcely a change at all, and could be resolved into the mere reception and acknowledgment of one proposition. For this purpose, a single assertion of the venerable and inspired *St. John*, has been greedily seized upon, and although elsewhere explained and enlarged by himself, has still been considered as a just and sufficient *epitome* of Scripture on the subject. The assertion is, "whosoever confesseth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God." This is considered as a beautiful specimen of scriptural simplicity; as a very concise, and yet a very intelligible definition of the new birth, which, mystical as some consider it, is here resolved into the common place matter, of belief in *the Messiahship of Jesus*. Let us suffer the apostle, however, to explain his own proposition, and we shall find that he is not quite so all-embracing in his creed as he is supposed. *First, however*, let this be supposed to be his actual meaning, and then let the test thus furnished be applied.

All "who confess that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, are born of God." The new birth then is a thing of mind exclusively, and not of the heart: it consists in the mental reception of a

speculative proposition. This is contrary to the idea of the psalmist, who said, "Create in me a clean *heart*, O God, and renew a right spirit within me;" contrary to the whole tenor of Scripture, which speaks of a *new heart*, a change in the affections. As a *doctrinal test*, how vague would it be! taking in believers and unbelievers, of all different grades of belief and unbelief, the orthodox and heterodox, provided they only receive the fundamental truth that Jesus was the promised Messiah.

Try it now as a *practical or moral test*! whom, O whom, of all the ungodly, who were merely nominally Christian, would it exclude? The envious, the wrathful, the covetous, the unjust, the adulterer, the false swearer? No; all these born and educated in a Christian land believe, or think and profess that they believe, "that Jesus is the Christ!" *These*, then, "*are born of God.*" In other words, the new birth is not a new birth unto righteousness, but entirely compatible with marked ungodliness. Surely it is an insult alike to the reason and piety of men, and to the character of God, to pronounce *very reprobates* to be "born of him," simply because the conviction has been *forced* upon their minds by a power of evidence not to be resisted, that *Jesus is the true Messiah!* While he was yet upon earth, demons, coerced against their will, pronounced him such; but they were demons still; such the devils *now* believe




him to be, and “believing, tremble;” are *they* therefore born of him?

*Absurdity then would attend the supposition, that this one verse was a perfect test or full description of being born again!*

Let us now compare the apostle with himself.

He has here furnished us with *one* test of the new birth. It is the belief of the Messiahship of Jesus of Nazareth; that is, none could be “born of God” who denied the proposition. But he has given us other collateral marks of discovery. In the second chapter we are told, that “whosoever is born of God, sinneth not;” that is, sinneth not wilfully and habitually. The *new heart* must be manifested by the new life, by walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. *This* is to be “born of God.”

*Again:* In the fourth chapter of this same Epistle, the apostle gives us a new mark of Christian character, of the new birth: “Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God; and *every one that loveth is born of God.*” If the proposition so much relied on, that “whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Messiah, is born of God,” is to be taken *per se*, as full sufficient by itself, then why not this? for the forms of expression are absolutely similar; “whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God: whosoever loveth, is born of God.” If either of these is a perfect test, then we have



two entirely different tests of the same state or character. Which shall we adopt? If both are necessary, then there is proof direct that the mere belief of the Messiahship of Jesus does not constitute the new birth. Shall we reject this and consider the *love of the brethren* as the test? Oh! in how many naturally amiable, but still unsanctified hearts will it be found to reign triumphant? How many tender-hearted and beneficent sceptics, how many amiable but unchristian moralists of the world, are living in the exercise of philanthropic benevolence? Are all *these born of God*? Surely not; because many of them confess not that "Jesus is the Christ."

Even here the apostle does not stop. In the fifth chapter we have another criterion, different from that which has been so much lauded for its simplicity. "Whosoever is born of God, overcometh the world."

Here then are not less than *four* very marked criterions of the *new birth*. Let them be placed in juxtaposition and named in order.

"He that is born of God sinneth not."

"Every one that loveth, is born of God."

"Whosoever confesseth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God."

"Whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the world."

Mark then the necessary and perfectly logical inferences that must be drawn from the apostle's

copiousness of illustration or description. It will not be said that his several expressions are synonymous and interchangeable; for surely *ceasing from sin is not loving our brother*, nor does that love include belief in the Messiah; nor again, is that belief, in itself, the conquest over the world. If, then, these expressions are not synonymous or identical, will it be asserted, that any one of them is sufficient? Then are the rest superfluous; but superfluity may not be charged upon any part of an *inspired record*: and if not superfluous, then, instead of being born again, made true and renewed believers by the single confession of Christ's proper official character, we have it as the clear sense of the apostle, that this can only be effected by "a faith which worketh by love, purifying the heart, and reforming the life." He was evidently no latitudinarian in creed; and it must be a Christian indeed, who can be measured by his standard, weighed in the scales of his judgment. Being born of God, in his vocabulary, means something more than a mere assent of the mind, or confession of the lips. It is "a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness;" and, in contending for a radical moral spiritual change, we need no stronger words, no more vivid descriptions, than *he* has furnished. His language, then, is in full accordance with that which is generally addressed to us by the voice of *inspiration*. He utters that only which is heard

from the oracles of God, both in plain direct assertion, and under varied but always significant and accordant imagery. The selection and employment of that imagery, by those "who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," decides the point as to "the mind of the Spirit." When we examine that imagery, we are almost *compelled* to admit the doctrine of spiritual conversion, as one of the leading doctrines of the book of God. It is represented as "the crucifying of the flesh, with its affections and lusts"—the "putting off the old man"—the "destroying of the body of sin"—the "being planted together in the likeness of Christ's death and also of his resurrection"—the "being buried with him by baptism unto death; that like as he was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life"—the "renewing of the Holy Ghost"—the "circumcision of the heart, in the Spirit, and not in the letter—*whose praise is not of men but of God*"—the "putting on of the new man which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness." Now, it is impossible to mistake the bearing and import of expressions like these, figurative though they be! They either point out the necessity and the importance of a spiritual change on the part of believers, or we must acknowledge them either intentionally or unintentionally, purposely or carelessly, *framed to deceive*. If we revo-

from this supposition, then our only alternative lies in the confession, that we must *be renewed in the spirit of our minds*; that we must be “born again, not only of water but of the Holy Spirit,” that our change must be so great, as to be a passing—from death unto life—a change, constituting us “*new creatures*”—so that “old things shall have passed away, and that all things have become new.”

It is erroneously imagined by some, and confidently asserted by others, that the Protestant Episcopal Church does not recognize the reality of this change—does not proclaim the indispensable necessity of spiritual renovation. Nothing could be more ill-founded or unjust. I would fain correct the error where it is honestly held, and refute the slander where it is promulged as such. An easy vindication from the condemning charge is furnished by her doctrinal standards, and her devotional formularies\*—by the writings

\* The frequent and pointed recognition of this spiritual change in the standard works of English theology, and especially in the published sermons of the eminent divines of the English Church, will be acknowledged by the candid of all denominations who are familiar with their writings, and is so commonly admitted as to preclude the necessity of quotations. On this side the Atlantic “the like precious faith,” is held and taught in the Church. The following testimonies, selected from unnumbered others which might be adduced, will probably be considered as *decisive*. It will appear from these, that this doctrine is

of those worthies both of this and the parent Church, who now live and speak but in their

not confined to a *party in the Church*, as is often unjustly asserted, (the author recognizes *no* party names or distinctions,) but is common to those who are popularly, however improperly considered, as standing on opposite sides.

The first representative and ornament of our American episcopate, (Bishop Seabury of Connecticut,) thus writes: " (Our Saviour makes a distinction between 'the children of this world,' and 'the children of light.' The same distinction is kept constantly in view by his apostles. The children of this world are remarked for their attention to the things of the world, and for their prudence in the management of them; the children of light for their attention to the things of eternity. The former 'live after the flesh; the latter after the Spirit. The former keep on the old man; the latter put on the new man.' In the language of Scripture, the *old man* signifies the fallen nature of Adam, with its evil tempers and passions. By the *new man*, or *new creature*, is meant the holy nature of Christ, which is love and obedience to God. This we obtain, not by the imputation of what Christ hath done for us, but by having his Spirit, and temper, and disposition, actually produced in us by the Holy Spirit of God. They, who being convinced of the blessed effect of obeying God in all things, do manifest in their lives the same spirit, and temper, and disposition, which appeared in Christ, copying the example of his holy life, are said to have put on the new man, which, 'after the image of God, is created in righteousness and true holiness.' They in truth become *new creatures*; they acquire a new heart, new temper, new desires, a new nature; 'old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new.' "—*Seabury's Sermons*, vol. ii. sermon 12, p. 169, 170.

Again; "He (Christ) hath given his Holy Spirit, to be

works, and by the solemn declarations which come warm from the hearts and the lips of those

in us the principle of a new, holy, and heavenly life; to do that for us which nature cannot do for itself." "Every thing in you that is good, is from the Spirit of God; for by his Spirit God works in us. The Spirit is the beginner, the supporter, and the finisher of that *new life of nature*, which we receive through Christ; which consists in a love of all goodness, and a hatred of every thing that is evil." "The corrupt tree of Adam's fallen nature, cannot bring forth the good fruits of the Spirit of God, and, consequently, cannot inherit the happiness arising from the fruits of the Spirit. Corrupt nature, can bring forth only corrupt practices. Cultivate it, improve it, adorn it; till it be changed and renewed by repentance and faith, in the language of Scripture, 'created anew in Christ Jesus,' it can bring forth nothing but evil lusts, and tempers, and passions; these must be its fruits, and the end, eternal death."—Vol. ii, ser. 9, p. 133, 134, 137.

The lamented and pious Dehon, in his exquisitely beautiful, and most interesting sermons, has thus clearly set his seal to the doctrine: speaking of man in his natural and unrenewed state, he remarks, "there is a feebleness of his will an insubordination of his passions, a prostitution and a confusion of his powers, and consequently an impurity of his nature, which unfits him for the holy abode and presence of his Maker. It is the office of the Spirit to move upon this chaos of his condition; to reduce the confusion to regularity; to dissipate the impurity and sublimate the affections, and into the dark mass that is 'without form and void,' to introduce order, and beauty, and meetness, for the divine approbation."—Vol. ii. ser. 50, p. 64.

"Though philosophy may teach us to be brave, disinterested, generous, can she teach us to be humble? Can she enable us to be pure? No; 'In us, that is, in our flesh,

many living teachers, who, with holy earnestness, call to newness of life. It is true, indeed, that

dwelleth no good thing.' The Christian finds in himself, a new and wonderful creation. He is conscious, it is something which he did not, by his own power alone, produce. There is divinity in it. In the calm hour of contemplation, he surveys the operation in his mind; and wrapping himself in his mantle, like Elijah, listening to 'the still small voice,' perceives that it is the Spirit of God."—Vol. ii. ser. 49, p. 58.

The following testimonies from one whose labours for the Church can scarcely be sufficiently appreciated, and whose loss the Church still feelingly deplores, are worthy of special regard, from the fact, that his zealous advocacy of the theory of *baptismal regeneration* was often either misconceived or misrepresented as a denial of the necessity for a *spiritual change of heart*; and the reader is requested to bear in mind, that they occur in discourses on the subject of baptismal regeneration. "*Regeneration* is a change of our *spiritual condition*, a translation into a state in which *our salvation is rendered possible*; renovation is *that change of heart and life*, by which *salvation is finally attained*."—Bishop Hobart's *Posthumous Works*, vol. ii. p. 472.

" 'Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.' 'If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.' 'If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.' These are the declarations which impress infinite importance on the inquiry on which we now enter, as to the means by which this *change of heart and life*, this spiritual renovation, may be obtained, increased, and preserved, by which we may become new creatures in Christ Jesus."

"And on this point there is a remark of fundamental importance. This renovation, in its commencement, its progress, and its perfection, is the work of the Holy Spirit, exciting and aiding, but not irresistibly impelling our own



the Church avoids, and that her ministers avoid, many of the popular phrases used in reference to

powers and exertions. To establish the agency of the Holy Spirit in our renovation, and our co-operation with his blessed influences, would exceed the limits, and be foreign to the design, of the present inquiry. But the Christian who reads his Bible, and finds there the declarations that 'we are saved by the renewing of the Holy Ghost,' that 'we are sanctified by the Holy Spirit,' that we must 'work out our salvation, for it is God who worketh in us both to will and to do,' and innumerable other declarations to the same effect, will not hesitate humbly to receive, and gladly to cherish a doctrine, the necessity of which results from a sober estimate of his nature, and which, without destroying his free agency, endues it with celestial strength, and crowns it with immortal triumphs. And the Churchman will be treacherous to that Church, to which it is his boast that he belongs, as well as treacherous to his own virtue, peace, and felicity, if he does not devoutly recognize the same doctrine in the articles, and in the prayers of the liturgy."—*Ibid*, p. 496, 497.

*Again:* " 'If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.' This is an inspired declaration, supported by the whole tenor of the Gospel, and set forth, with the utmost strength and perspicuity, in all the formularies of our Church, and particularly in that baptismal office, by which we were regenerated, brought into a state of salvation, and made God's children by adoption and grace. How erroneous then is the opinion, which, it is to be feared, proves ruinous to the piety of many, that religion consists in the mere regulation of the exterior, and not in the transformation of the heart! and how vain indeed is the attempt to regulate that exterior by the standard of moral duty, unless the principles and springs of action, which are seated in the heart, are corrected and purified! *Brand not the doctrine*

the subject—phrases, some of which are equivocal, and others erroneous; but which, by many,

*of the transformation of the soul, of the new birth unto righteousness, as fanatical, until you have consulted, I will not say Scripture, but a guide acknowledged by all—human reason.*"  
—*Ibid*, p. 519, 520.

The sentiments of the pious and energetic Ravenscroft, who, alas! like his distinguished brother in the episcopate, last quoted, can only speak from his works, are not to be mistaken. His own heart having been signally changed through the influence of Divine grace, he regarded such change as needful to every sinner. Still, with Bishop Hobart, he contended for the scriptural use of the term *regeneration*, and its exclusive application to, or connexion with, baptism, as the following extracts will sufficiently show. "Whatever difficulty yourself and many others may labour under upon this subject, proceeds altogether from confounding two subjects altogether distinct, viz.—*Regeneration* and *Conversion*: both to be sure essential to us as sinners, but in a manner distinct from each other." Again. "In both these senses the word *regeneration* is used in our baptismal service—first, as an effect produced in bestowing spiritual grace; secondly, to denote a change of condition—that those rightly baptized are *no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God.*"

"A careful examination of the office for baptism, will show you that such is the meaning which the Church attaches to the word *regeneration*: and if attended to as it ought to be, would not only prevent the confusion of mind consequent on confounding regeneration and conversion, but restore the ordinance itself to that respect in the eyes of Christians, to which it is so highly entitled."—*Letter to Mrs. Robinson, published in his Memoir prefixed to his Works*, vol. i. p. 27, 28.

are made very shibboleths, or tests of orthodoxy. But she expresses *the great fact of spiritual*

In a sermon on 1 Cor. ii. 14, he thus expresses himself. "But, while this is undoubtedly the primary sense in which the apostle here uses the words *natural man*, as is evident from the context, for he throughout, contrasts the natural man with the spiritual, or spiritually enlightened man; yet, as I observed in the outset, this is not the only sense in which the text is to be used and applied by us. For we may apply it to man as he now is, a fallen, depraved creature, savouring only the things of time and sense, and indisposed and averse to the entertainment of things spiritual and heavenly. It also denotes *the unrenewed man, the person upon whom the grace of the Gospel has produced no change; upon whom the Spirit of God hath not operated the mighty transformation of a new creature.*"—Vol. ii. ser. 6, p. 66, 67.

Of the *living prelates* and other writers of the Church, declarations the most explicit, and the most pertinent and apposite to our purpose might be adduced in unlimited number. This is the less necessary, however, as they can still speak for themselves, and may be heard as though with one heart and one mouth, bearing testimony to the great doctrine of a necessary change in all the unrenewed in the affections of the heart, and the actions of the life. The following, however, are too marked and forcible to be withheld. "What we ought precisely to understand by the word regeneration, has been of late years much controverted. It is to be regretted that there should be even a verbal difference among Christians on this point; it causes uncharitable disputation, and the appearance of great difference in doctrine, even where little or none exists. It has also caused a misunderstanding of the language of our liturgy. Some infer from it that we believe in no necessary change of heart, but what is effected in baptism." "The Scriptures, we know, teach nothing more clearly than that the heart

*renovation and its essential importance in the hallowed language of God's own word.* What

must be renewed, created again into good works; and this must unquestionably be the work of God's Spirit."—*Bishop Griswold's Discourses*, ser. 14, p. 214—217.

"As we said, the notion prevails, and it seems to be a frequent, and we have reason to fear, a fatal error of some who call themselves Christians, that if they live sober and regular lives, avoid scandalous vices, and discharge the common duties of life, they have a good conscience towards God; that this alone, or chiefly, will secure their eternal salvation. But is this that change of heart and newness of life which the Scriptures speak of, and the Saviour requires?" "'Marvel not that we say unto you, Ye must be born again.' We shall be unfaithful stewards of God's mysteries, if we do not teach, and insist, with all long-suffering and doctrine, that the most upright moralist, if he would save his soul, must by prayer and searching the Scriptures, and by religious duties, seek an interest in the only Saviour; he must obtain a new heart and a new spirit disposed to honour God and love his fellow-men."—Ser. 19, p. 294, 300, 301.

"The word regeneration is applied, as are also several kindred expressions, to a *certain change of state*, and to a *certain change of character*." "The *change of state* alluded to, is the transition from being out of the visible Church, to being within that body. The *change of character* alluded to, is recovery from the dominion and the curse of sin, to victory over sin, and when combined with the change of state, or union with the Church, to pardon." "Let the reader be cautioned, expressly against connecting the popular idea of regeneration, with that word, as applied in this essay, to baptism. No moral or converting influences of the Spirit, no deposite, or seed, or leaven, intended to become active, and result in such influences, or of the same sanctifying

more should man require? Why should she “be wise above what is written?” Why should she

nature with them, are here meant in that use of the word; but only the ratifying, ascribed to the Holy Ghost, of our separation from the world to the visible Church, and of the grant to us of its privileges. All practical, converting, new-creating influences of the Spirit, and all their elements, we include in the change called moral regeneration.” “The operation of the Spirit in producing this change of character, is often called in Scripture, *conversion*, or turning; it is often called *renovation*, or renewing, which word means properly not mere refreshing, as is commonly imagined, but *making anew*, or *new creating*. It is also called being born again, or regenerated.”—*Bishop H. U. Onderdonk's Tract on Regeneration*, p. 1, 2, 4.

The whole tract, from its ingenuity, its thorough examination of Scripture, and its explicit avowal of the necessity of a spiritual change, is worthy of the reader's careful perusal. In expressing this sentiment, however, the author must be understood as expressing no opinion concerning the propriety of the application of the term regeneration, as made in the tract, in connexion with the epithet *moral*; nor as acquiescing in *all* the views which the tract contains. From some of these, and especially from the positions, that “this change, moral regeneration, is gradual and progressive, that it admits of increase, decay, renewal, and repetition; that it is not only the commencing point of sanctification, but includes in it its several stages to the highest”\*—from these, the author would probably be compelled to dissent, nay, has already intimated a different opinion.†

The last authority adduced to show the certain recognition of this great doctrine of a spiritual change, by the Church in this country, is taken from a letter of a distin-

\* See Tract on Regeneration, page 19.

† See page 245 of this work.

“savour of the things that be of men, rather than of those which be of God?”

guished layman of the established Church in Ireland, Alexander Knox, Esq. to *Mr. now Bishop Jebb*, which, from the fact and the manner of its reprint in this country, becomes, constructively, one of the best evidences of existing opinion *here*. The language of the author would, however, indicate, that this great truth was not *there* always presented with as much prominency and force as its importance required. “Now, the New Testament dwells on *this* (the creation of a clean heart, and the renewal of a right spirit,) as its main object: ‘Make the tree good,’ says Christ, ‘and its fruit will also be good’—‘Except ye be converted, and become as little children, you can in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven.’ These expressions evidently imply, that, in order to be Christians, persons must undergo a moral change: that Christianity is designed to make them something which they are not by nature; and that the alteration produced in the mind, the affections, and the conduct, by a right and full acquiescence in the Gospel, is so radical, so striking, and so efficacious, as to warrant the strongest imagery, in order to do it justice, that language can furnish. ‘Except a man,’ says our Lord, ‘be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God’—‘If any man,’ says St. Paul, ‘be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new’—‘If ye then be risen with CHRIST, seek those things which are above: for ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.’ ‘Being justified by faith, we have peace with God by our Lord JESUS CHRIST; for the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us.’ And, to quote but one passage more from St. Paul; ‘They that are CHRIST’S have crucified the flesh, with the affections and desires.’”

Now, what, I ask, do these expressions imply? After

If the quotations which are subjoined in the notes, are impartially weighed by the reader, he

every fair allowance for figure and metaphor, do they not convey a far deeper and more mysterious view of Christianity than is commonly adverted to? Some divines, I know, endeavour to explain these and similar passages as if they referred rather to a relative and extrinsic, than to a real and internal change; as if they meant merely proselytism from Heathenism to Christianity, and initiation into outward Church privileges. But this miserable mode of interpretation is flatly inconsistent with the whole tenor of the New Testament. It is not **HEATHENISM**, but **MORAL EVIL**, which is here pointed out, as the grand source of human misery: and the aptitude of the GOSPEL to overcome and extirpate this **MORAL EVIL**, is what is dwelt upon as its great and leading excellence. These, therefore, and all similar passages, must be understood in a moral sense: and when so understood, how deep is their import! To suppose that there is not a strict appositiveness in these figurative expressions, would be to accuse the apostles and Christ himself, of bombastic amplification: but if they have been thus applied because no other ones were adequate to do justice to the subject, I say again, what a view do they give of Christianity!

And again, in summing up his views, the author remarks—"These points, therefore, I take to be the great features of Christian preaching:—

"1. The danger and misery of an unrenewed, unregenerate state; whether it be of the more gross, or of the more decent kind.

"2. The absolute necessity of an inward change: a moral transformation of mind and spirit.

"3. The important and happy effects which take place when this change is really produced."

Thus far this pious and able writer. The republication.

will perceive how unjustly the charge of opposition to this blessed and wholesome doctrine was preferred, against some, while *living*, who now "*rest from their labours*:" and how entirely groundless it is, when urged against the Church generally. It will be seen that it is by no means the doctrine of *a sect or party in the Church*, but of the *Church itself, as a whole*; and that its profession, so far from being a novelty, forced upon us by the strong tide of popular opinion, is indeed "the old commandment which we had," and respected and obeyed, "from the beginning."

To those who may, perhaps, have been long accustomed to hear, to believe, and to circulate this undeserved charge, we would pointedly appeal. With such testimonies spread fully before them, and with the many disclaimers that come

of his work from the Protestant Episcopal Press, especially in connexion with the warm commendation of it both to clergy and laity, which is given in the preface, by the American editors, we repeat it, is an unanswerable proof of the general soundness of our clergy and people on this essential point. We will only add, that our firm conviction accords with that expressed in the preface to this admirable tract—"that in proportion as the truths and influences which it recommends, shall be proclaimed from the pulpits of our Church, and adopted in the lives of her members," "the comfortable Gospel of Christ, truly preached, truly received, and truly followed," will prevail "to the breaking down of the kingdom of sin, Satan, and death."



indignant from the lips of the unjustly accused, sounding in their ears—we would put it to their moral fairness—their sense of justice—their regard for truth—their Christian principles and feelings—and ask, if they can reconcile it to any of these, if they can answer it to conscience and to God—to repeat and reiterate a charge which has been again and again denied and disproved, and with the refutation of which they are fully acquainted. Surely he who repeats a refuted allegation, but withholds the refutation—he who propagates a slander, however current, knowing it to be such, is “a false witness against his neighbour, a slanderer of his brother.”

Even independently of these higher and Christian considerations, policy might seem to demand, that the view of the Church should not be lightly misrepresented before the Christian public. The times are ominous of evil to the cause of unadulterated evangelical truth. In these troublous and unsettled times, she has been marked by firm resistance against heresy and error, and by quiet “continuance in well doing.” Her stability both in doctrine and practice, amidst the varied defections and innovations of the age, has attracted common and favourable regard, and she is already hailed by Protestant Christendom generally, as a fast and powerful ally in the cause of essential truth and religious order. It is, therefore, *a question* worthy of serious and mature consider-

ation, whether, justice and charity aside, it is wise or prudent, by unworthy suspicions and ill-founded charges, to endeavour to weaken an influence wholesome in its character, already powerful in its degree—and which now is, and must hereafter be, greatly needed in the common warfare against open infidelity, lax Christianity, and popular delusion. Each grain of just esteem unworthily subtracted from her, is so much taken from the Christian scale; and therefore “an injury and wrong” not merely to her, but to the religious world. For herself she has little to fear. Her “soundness in the faith” must be apparent. Her light may not be concealed. Her witness is abroad. She may humbly say, in the spirit and words of her divine Lord, “Ask them which have heard me; they know what I have said. I ever spake openly to the people, and in secret have I said nothing;” and the sum of that public teaching, according to the consentient evidence of all that will bear witness to the truth, is this—*“If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.”*

The Bible, then, and the Church, alike insist upon the change of heart and affections, as “generally necessary to salvation.” One exception is, however, claimed by some, in regard to those who can scarcely, with truth, be said ever to have been in a state of nature—an unrenewed state; but who have evidently been in a Christian state, if not from their birth, at least from their baptism.

in infancy, and the first development of reason, the commencement of voluntary and responsible action. The exception, even if *theoretically* admitted, will, it is presumed, be of rare practical application. The claims of many who are supposed to be included in it, are doubtful indeed. Natural amiability, peculiar sensitiveness of feeling, and delicacy of moral perception, great tenderness of conscience, and a general conformity to the law of moral obligation; these, independently of that divinely infused principle which causes conversion, may easily be mistaken for the genuine and sufficient work of the Spirit of God. Not greatly different from this stamp of character, seems to have been that possessed by "the young man who came to Jesus," to ask "what he should do that he might inherit eternal life," who honestly thought, and openly, but not boastfully declared, that he "had kept all the commandments from his youth up;" "whom Jesus, beholding, loved;" and to whom he said, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God." Still he was not, by the appointed initiation, *within* that kingdom; and he was told, "yet one thing thou lackest"—viz. that faith in the Son of God which would make thee renounce the world, follow him "through evil report and good report," and add the sanctifying touch of Gospel grace to all thy moral virtues. Admitting, however, that there is no mistake as to the supposed operations of the Spirit upon the

minds of these who seem to have been believers "from their youth up;" yea, admitting that they had been sanctified from their birth, this would furnish no just reason against proclaiming the universal necessity of the *new heart* and the *new life*. By the supposition, they have what would be pronounced such in *others*, although apparently ever characteristic of themselves; that is, they have the Christian heart and the Christian life; they are found in the image of Christ, and if so, they now "have that which by nature they could not have;" and, not by nature, but "by *the grace of God*, they are what they are." They are then *changed*, even though the time of that change was anterior either to *our* recollection or *their own*. The early bestowal of grace, even though coeval with the first dawning of infant intellect, must not induce the denial of grace, and a transfer of its glory to fallen corrupt nature. The early experience of conversion, its unnoted progress amidst infantile weakness and childish immaturity, having its external developement ever apportioned to the developement of mind, and shedding additional and sacred loveliness even over their infancy and childhood, can surely never prove that they were always the same, that they neither required nor received a change, and that it is consequently wrong to insist upon the universal necessity of a spiritual change. Either they are in a *state of nature* or a *state of grace*. If the

former, however amiable and lovely in character, they still *need* to be *renewed*; if the latter, that is, in a state of grace, then they are living monuments of grace, proofs of its reality and efficiency; and it would be as absurd to say that we must not urge the *universal* necessity of conversion, because they require it not, as it would be to say, that the indispensable necessity of faith and repentance must not be inculcated upon a mixed congregation, because *some* in that congregation may have already repented and believed. The exhortation to renovation, in all cases takes hold of its proper subjects. The renewed need it not; it therefore passes by them, and applies itself to the *unrenewed*. If a Samuel was “lent unto the Lord” when a babe, and heard the voice of God’s Spirit, and was made a prophet unto him, when, as a little child, he wore “a linen tunic,” and ministered unto Eli in the temple—or if it was predicted of John before his birth, that “he should be called the Prophet of the Highest,” because he should “go before him in the spirit and the power of Elias”—this furnishes no argument against the general necessity of a special call and an *external* dedication to the prophetic or ministerial work; nor may we cease to proclaim, that *all who partake our fallen nature, and are born into our evil world, require to be renewed*, because some have been so early and so unobservedly renewed, that we know not *when* the process commenced, nor *how* it was

*carried on; its origin and progress* being lost amidst the vague, shifting, and partially obliterated remembrances of infancy, but its effects remaining "unto this present," as proofs of its reality. The work in such cases is "God's work, and it is marvellous in our eyes;" we must not turn its wonder and its glory against its Almighty Author. "If out of the mouth of very babes and sucklings, he hath ordained praise," let it be to the "praise of the glory of his grace;" he hath done it "to still the enemy and the avenger;" let us not wrest this precociousness in grace, this miracle of goodness, from its legitimate end, or use it against the grace which it so greatly magnifies!

None, then, are by nature so pure and amiable as to be beyond the need of spiritual *renewal*.\*

\* Against this universality it may be urged, that it would necessarily include *infants*; and that, as they are confessedly incapable of receiving a *moral change*, it would therefore militate against the supposition of their salvation. The same objection might be urged against the doctrine of their native depravity—of original or birth sin; and therefore, if valid, would drive us from the scriptural ground that we are "born in sins—the children of wrath." The truth is, that the Gospel scheme of grace and mercy was meant for those who were *born in sins*; and as it may save those who are capable of faith and repentance, on the conditions of faith and repentance, so has it a salvation for those who are *incapable* of them, *independently of their exercise*. The salvation of infants dying in infancy, is matter of direct revelation; or, at least, is to be fairly inferred from the declaration, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven"—and some

Such is the sure teaching of God's blessed word; and our hearts, however reluctantly, are compelled to acknowledge its correctness. Who of us would be willing, in his natural, unchanged state, to stand before the throne of Him who "is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity?" Who could think with complacency, of carrying earthly affections and

other kindred assertions. Yet it will not be contended that they are saved by right of *native, inherent innocence*, but only through the blood of atonement—through the merits of Christ, availing to them, although they knew him not. A change then is admitted in the *supposed removal of original sin*—in their being "washed in the blood of the Lamb." It involves no greater inconsistency to suppose that they are cleansed from the *defilement attaching to our fallen nature*, by such operation of the Spirit as may be adapted to their age and state. If "the blood of Christ can avail to their justification," although "by reason of their tender age" they cannot *believe*, why may not the *Spirit* breathe upon them, and give them meetness for heaven? the change produced being such only as their state required, as their developement allowed, and such moreover as involved no active operation of the moral powers, no positive decision of the will. To such a theory we see no reasonable objection. We must either go the whole length of asserting native sinlessness, or suppose that sinfulness can find admission in heaven, or else we must admit some theory substantially the same with that here sketched. But at all events, the necessity of a spiritual change is a truth of revelation—the salvation of infants is also revealed—and we would therefore hold and proclaim them both—even though to our limited apprehension they might seem to conflict—and although we knew not how they could be made to harmonize.

earthly pollutions into the realms of light and life? Who would be fit for heaven in his state of nature? and to whom, in that state, would heaven be blissful? To speak, then, of a *spiritual transformation*, is not to utter the language of folly or enthusiasm. As well might we expect to carry these *unchanged bodies*, with all their pollutions and infirmities, into the abode of saints and angels, and of the mighty God, as to have these souls "presented faultless before him," in all their native vileness and corruption! And if there must be a change before we can be meet for the kingdom of heaven, be it remembered, it must *be here* experienced. It is written, that "as the tree falleth, so shall it lie," that "there is no work, nor device, nor repentance, in the grave." He who, when surprised by death, is "unholy, shall be unholy still." There is *no* alchemy in death, to transmute the baseness and the dross of the soul into "the pure gold," that shall be "as a vessel unto honour, meet for the Master's use;" nor is there to the soul in its intermediate, disembodied state, any flame to *purify*, distinct from the flame of wrath that "is not quenched."

Have you then, reader, been the subject of this great and gracious change? Have you become "a new creature," through the aid of God's efficient grace? The question here asked ought to be self-addressed by you with all earnestness and solemnity, and it should be self-answered



“in all godly sincerity.” You cannot be at a loss to answer it. By “the fruits of the Spirit” you are to judge of the presence and influence of the Spirit: and that Spirit himself has given you the catalogue of these fruits.\* “They that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts.” Is it thus with you? Have you a hatred of sin and a love of holiness? Have you new and spiritualized affections? Have you Christian graces? Do you live the Christian life? If these questions, even in their humblest and most restricted import, can be affirmatively answered, then, however distant from perfection, you may rejoice in the conviction that you are “renewed in the spirit of your mind;” but if not, O seek this earnestly, with your whole heart. This renewal is not a thing to be waited for, but to be sought, to be implored by fervent prayer. No man, it is true, can change his own heart; but every man who perceives and laments his sinfulness, and feels his own impotency, can take up the language of the Psalmist, and say—“Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me;” or again—“Turn thou me, and so shall I be turned—cleanse thou me, and so shall I be clean;” and to such a prayer, uttered in

\* Galatians v. 22, 23—“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.”

sincerity and truth, there is ground to hope for "an answer of peace" from Him who hath said, by the Son of his love, "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him." And let those who profess to have received this renewal, give the evidence of its reality. The claim, unsupported by the vouchers of the life, nay, *disproved* by the conduct, refutes itself, and brings shame and contempt to him by whom it is advanced, and discredit upon the Gospel cause. Assertions, especially the assertions of our own lips, cannot be evidence to others. They ask for facts. Worth a thousand arguments, *is a changed life*. This is an irrefragable proof. It is **DEMONSTRATION**.

## CHAPTER VII.

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 THE NEW MAN MATURING FOR  
HEAVEN.
 

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" They go from strength to strength."

" The path of the just is as the shining light, that shined more and more unto the perfect day."

" But though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day."

" But we all, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

THE believer has now fairly entered upon his course. As a *new man*, with a new heart, and a lightened spirit, he begins a better and a spiritual life. Truly can he now say, " I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." Now commences his progressive sanctification; a sanctification, which, if he fall not from grace, will be more and more complete until it is merged in the glorification of a better world. It has already been briefly hinted, that this sanctification was

not to be confounded with that one great change by which he became a *new creature*. The distinction between them is obvious and marked; and may here, perhaps, with propriety be more fully illustrated.

There is a loose and extended sense, in which *Sanctification* may be said to commence with the first convictions of sin, with the first breathings of better thought and purpose. But in strictness and propriety of speech, it cannot be predicated of man while he is yet in his sins, under their full guilt and dominion. He must have ceased from sin before he can be sanctified in holiness. *The change of heart, of affections*, then, is the *beginning* of the divine life; *progressive sanctification* is the growth and advancement in that life. *The first*, marks his spiritual birth, his entrance into the spiritual world as "a babe in Christ;" by *the other*, he is "nourished up" through successive stages, to the strength and "stature of a perfect man" in Christ. The preparatory stages of early conviction, of incipient faith, being fitly compared to "the *day spring* from on high visiting him," and "the *day star* arising in his heart," conversion is the rising of *the Sun of Righteousness* upon his soul; while the progress of that Sun towards its meridian, causes the subsequently increasing illumination of his mind and brightening of his character; making his path to be, indeed, "*like the shining light, which shineth more and*

*more unto the perfect day.*" Conversion first places him on the Christian course, as a competitor for "the prize of the high calling of God, in Christ Jesus the Lord." Sanctification is the actual "running of the race set before him, with patience;" "forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those which are before." St. Paul was "*a new creature*," "*a new man*," from the period of his *conversion*. Still, he had many things to learn both doctrinally and practically; both by the ordinary grace, and by the extraordinary influxes of the Spirit; and therefore "he counted not himself to have apprehended; but he followed after, if so be that he might apprehend that, for which also he was apprehended of Christ Jesus;" and it was this subsequent effort and discipline which made him "in labours more abundant," eminent in gifts and graces, "not a whit behind the chiefest apostles;" "a burning and a shining light to the Church of God." A single manifestation on his way to Damascus, with its effects upon his mind, changed him from a furious persecutor, into an humble follower and zealous preacher of Christ; and the entire change was brought about within a definite and brief period; but his *sanctification* occupied the whole remainder of his life, and was only terminated when he won and wore the martyr's crown of blood, preparatory to his reception of *the* "crown of life, laid up for him in heaven,"

to which he had long aspired, and which he knew that "the Lord, the righteous Judge, himself would give him in the last day."

This distinction between the one great influence, or course of influences, which changes *principle*, changes the *heart*, and thus makes men "new creatures," and that gradual renovation of the Spirit which gives the brightening lustrous finish to practice, making the believer more and more "conformed to the image of Christ," and changing him "from glory to glory," is, to our apprehension, important. When observed, it gives definiteness to ideas, and precision to language; while, without it, there is the ambiguity of a *supposed renewal always going on, and yet never amounting to what would constitute a new creature*; no change being ascribed to him but such as is merely in progress; and consequently no recognition being made of his spiritual existence, his distinctive character, as a man of God, simply because he had not "already fully attained, neither was already perfect."

On this, however, I would not too strongly insist. As long as the necessity of a spiritual change is admitted in theory, and the change itself exhibited in practice, it will not be of vital moment, whether *sanctification* is regarded as *growing out of this change*, or as a *part of it*, and its *consummation*. Rather, then, let us trace the Christian in his brightening course towards the heavenly

world, and show how truly it may be said, that "he is changed from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord."

The analogy of all God's dealings, temporal and spiritual, would lead us to expect this grace of improvement, this gradual discipline for immortality. "His mercies are over all his works;" and to all the creatures of his hand, rational or irrational, these mercies are displayed in fitting them for their intended sphere of action, and the changes of condition or being through which they are to pass. He gives even to the plants and trees of the earth the power of self-adaptation to a change of soil or climate. If the animal migrate to a colder region, it is clothed with a warmer fur or fleece; if again it is removed to the torrid zone, its cumbrous covering is quickly thinned. The insect, in its earthly and reptile state, is fitted for that state; a kindly torpor, a temporary or seeming death prepares it for the endurance of its great and wondrous change; and that change fits it for a new element, and a higher range of enjoyment, giving it wings of light and beauty, with which to sport upon the breeze. A similar care is exerted in regard to the animal structure of man, and in the adaptation of his mind to the successive stages of childhood, youth, and maturity, as well as to the exigencies of special times and requirements. And can we suppose that the soul would be neglected? that it

would not be provided at least with the *means* of preparation for the change through which it is to pass in the progressive course of being? This would be an unreasonable supposition. The Gospel scheme refutes it, the individual effect of the Gospel in the conversion of the soul from sin, is an additional refutation; and as the effect of that conversion is increased meetness for the Kingdom of heaven, the presumption would be, that unless prevented by human perverseness and obstinacy, "He who had begun a good work, would perform it unto the day of recompense;" and that the discipline of preparation, in the believer, would go steadily onward, until the hour of *his departure was at hand*, and time about to be exchanged for eternity. This presumption derives additional force from the consideration of *the trying ordeal through which he will have to pass, and the greatness of the change to which that ordeal will be introductory.*

Fearful, indeed, under any circumstances, is the encounter, and sore the conflict, with the King of terrors: and much, therefore, will the believer need the panoply of grace, "the whole armour of God," and a thorough antecedent training of mind, spirit, and character. And the change of his state, consequent on death, will be as great as the passage to it is trying. "The heavens are high above the earth;" and the heavenly state immeasurably more glorious than our



best estate upon earth. So different are these two conditions, that we can only wonder that the same Being, however changed, should have experience of both. The body, fitted as it is for earth, may not, unchanged, enter into the heavenly world. "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." The grossness of earth must be given to the earth again; corruption must have "its perfect work," in order that "this corruptible may put on incorruption." The material fabric must be utterly dismembered, and the matter of which it is composed resolved into its elements, in order that it may be "raised again in glory." Now, although we have represented the great spiritual change, the change of the heart, as somewhat analogous to this, still it is evident that even after its experience, the last touch and finish are not yet given to the Christian character—the "gold" is not yet "seven times tried," nor is it as yet burnished for the Master's eye, and "*the Master's use*;" nay, and however tried and brightened, how unmeet will it be! After the closest possible approximation, how wide the difference between the saint of earth, and "the saints in light!" To be translated from a world of imperfection, sorrow, and sin, to a world "wherein dwelleth righteousness"—to exchange the society and the converse of sinful men, for the society and the converse of the "spirits of the just made perfect"—of angels and arch-

angels—to go to “Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant, and to God, the Judge of all;” O, it is a great, a mighty translation! How shall the believer be prepared for it, unless his path of earthly obedience and piety shine “more and more unto the perfect day”—unless he be, indeed, “changed from glory to glory,” and, like Moses from Nebo, or the Saviour from Olivet, bid adieu to the earth from a point that is nearest to heaven?

It is not here contended, that this progressive brightening and maturing for heaven, is always displayed by those “who name the name of Christ,” and whom we have reason to believe renewed in heart. Various unfavourable causes are permitted to operate. Earthly impediments are in the way of Christian proficiency. The world takes too strong a hold upon their affections, and challenges too exclusive occupancy of their time. They are not what they should be—they are not what they might be. This is “*their* infirmity.” The principle of divine growth and proficiency is within them; they must be answerable for its non-developement. And yet, although some are unfaithful to themselves, and laggards in the path of duty, by how many others is this gradual ripening conspicuously displayed! How often does it attract the notice even of the worldling’s eye, and cause Christian beholders to praise “Him who hath given such grace to men!” Without any special reason for anticipating a

speedy translation, the believer seems to live and act under a constant and realizing sense of nearness to eternity. He is "in the fear of the Lord all the day long;" and that holy fear, tempered by love, goes with him to his nightly pillow. He "bath set the Lord always on his right hand; therefore is he not greatly moved" from his Christian steadfastness. He lives in holy expectancy, lives by watchfulness and prayer. "His garments are always white." "His loins are girded, his lamp burning, and he himself like unto one that waiteth for his Lord." Every day brings him nearer to his rest, his home, his God. Every day gives him a higher position, a more commanding and entrancing prospect, as he "ascends up towards the heavenly Jerusalem." He leaves far below him the plains and the votaries of earthliness, folly, and sin. He breathes a purer air, he has a serener sky. He is "in the world, but not of the world." He "walks by faith, and not by sight." "His conversation, (his citizenship) is in heaven, from whence also he looks for the Lord Jesus;" yea, he is evidently "looking for, and hasting unto the coming of the Son of God." Like Enoch, even on earth "he walks with God;" and in due season "he is not, for God takes him." This it is, "to be renewed after the image of Christ"—to be "changed from glory to glory." And upon the believer, who even here has this blessed heavenly-mindedness,

we look with admiring awe; and always, with associated ideas of heaven. We feel at once that he is indeed "but a stranger and sojourner" here, and that his home is above. It is impossible to disconnect the view of his brightening course, from the thought of its manifest direction and end. He is still the child of earth; but he is evidently a destined inheritor of the kingdom of heaven; "an heir of God, and a joint heir with Christ:" and as we look upon him we are invariably reminded of heaven, "of God and of the Lamb." I have noted those who seemed thus to carry about with them reflected or anticipated heaven, and the idea has occurred, how sweet, how sacred, how heavenly, must be the meditations of those so thoroughly spiritualized—how holy must be their communings with the unseen God, to whom they are privileged to enjoy such holy nearness—and what intensity of desire they must feel, "to depart and be with Jesus." Doubtless the workings of a mind thus abstracted from the world, and raised to high and heavenly objects, must have peculiar vigour, and a range almost boundless. The heart, whose sensibilities have thus been elicited and consecrated to God, must luxuriate in feeling; feeling, to which the world of nominal and ordinary believers are strangers. Mentally and spiritually, there is indeed to such a believer, a world of his own; and it is, it must be, a world of brightness

and blessedness—an earthly heaven—the “outer court” of the celestial “Holy of Holies.”

I can still call to mind the veneration with which, in other days, I looked upon some who thus walked with God in “the beauty of holiness.” Their memory is mingled with the ever fresh and unfading remembrances of childhood and youth. Among the forms that are wont to present themselves before memory’s eye, and to renew the feelings of by-gone days,—is that of *a good old man* whose silvery locks and venerable appearance challenged my childish admiration, and to whom indeed “the hoary head was a crown of glory.” Bearing the name, he seemed also to inherit somewhat of the spirit, of “the father of the faithful;” for he indeed “commanded his children and his household after him, that they should serve the Lord.” As his residence adjoined my maternal home, that happy, blessed home to which my thoughts so often revert, and around which my fond affections still love to linger—his appearance, his converse, and his habits, of course, became familiar to my observation; and they all concurred to inspire me with an abiding and almost a superstitious reverence for practical religion. In the humble yet independent occupation, in the rustic garb, and with the simple habits of a country farmer, he challenged a measure of my respect which neither wealth nor *comp* could ever extort. It occurred even to my

childish mind, that there was upon him the clear impress of God. He seemed to present me with an embodied image of godliness. The idea which was vague and confused in the abstract, became clear and distinct in the living personification. I saw what it was to be a Christian; and I loved, I honoured the name and the character. His holy consistency charmed me, I knew not why. He was always the same. His religion was "as the garment that covered him withal:" nay, more than this, for it was never laid aside. He carried it with him whithersoever he went, by day and by night. If he walked abroad over his fields, he thought and spoke of the goodness of Him who clothed the fields in beauty—who "caused the grass to grow for the cattle, and the green herb for the service of man." He was truly a laborious man—but piety made labour seem light, and "his sleep was sweet to him," for it was rest to weariness, and it was consecrated by prayer. Frugality and industry marked the whole circle of domestic arrangements. "Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord," was the motto of his house. None were idle there; yet all were cheerful and contented. Their plain but substantial fare was ever blessed by the voice of solemn prayer: and it might truly be said, that "they ate their meat in joy and singleness of heart, joying and praising God." "The morning and the evening oblation" were

duly presented on the domestic altar; at which the good old patriarch himself presided, as the high priest of his own family. The spirit of the head, seemed largely to descend to all the members of this truly Christian family. There was a daughter who sat in the cheerlessness of utter hopeless blindness. She had either been blind from her birth, or the privation had come to her by disease at an early age. Yet she was apparently contented and happy. It was her Father's pleasure that she should never look upon the fair face of creation, and therefore she murmured not. There was light to her in the inner chambers of the soul; there shone "the true light"—the light of life. In a moment, by the voice, and even by the footstep, she recognized each friendly visitant; and a placid smile would steal over her features, as she raised her head, and turned towards them as though to look upon them, and with her gentle voice gave them her cordial greeting. Methinks I can see her now, engaged in her favourite occupation of knitting—her fingers moving with mechanical exactitude and singular rapidity, and her sightless eyeballs from time to time examining the work, as though to test its correctness. But she is gone! consumption "marked her for its own;" and full of faith, long tried and purified in the furnace of affliction, ripe for glory, she exchanged a darksome world for the light of ceaseless day. A sister, not less gentle by nature,

nor less pious through grace, followed her at no distant period. The same insidious malady slowly drank up the springs of health and life. For years she suffered. For years she may be said to have "died daily." Yet she too "suffered as a Christian"—and "her end was peace." With scarcely an exception, the spirit which sanctified *the dead*, rests *over the living*; and the blessing lingers yet in the habitation, or rather in the family, of the just, descending to the *childrens' children*. But the good old father: let me return to him. He too hath "fallen asleep in Jesus." But not until he had "testified unto the men of his generation." I would be an ingrate indeed could I forget with what tact and effect he could "speak a word in season:" or how a solemn word, thus "fitly spoken," came home to my own soul. I had been long and sorely tried by disease. My young life had indeed "drawn nigh to the grave." I had felt "the bitterness of death:" and that bitterness of death was newly past. I was "saved so as by fire." For the first time after many weary months of seclusion and of suffering, I had adventured forth with languid step, to look upon the unclouded sky, to taste the fresh and balmy air, to stand upon the verdant bank, and to watch the swelling sails as they expanded to the gentle breeze, and glided along over the bosom of the sparkling waters; in a word, to enjoy the luxury of nature in her



freshness and her beauty. The richness of the treat was felt; gratitude was busy at my heart—and that heart was full. It was then that this venerable man, as though sent of God, drew near. Kindness was in his heart—tenderness beamed from his eye, and breathed in his tones. He pressed my hand—looked full in my pallid face—congratulated me on my resuscitation, and in few but solemn words, warned me, as I had already been warned of God, to consecrate my spared life to Him by whom it had been “ransomed from the power of the grave.” The warning sunk into my heart. I retired to my chamber to muse, to weep, and to pray. The incident and the converse of that day I must ever regard as among the links of that chain of mercies and of means which has bound me to my God and to his altar for ever. That my hand now traces the lines of a Christian work, and that my lips proclaim the words of “the everlasting Gospel,” is partially to be ascribed to “the speech that distilled as the dew,” to the life that was eloquent for God, of this humble and aged saint who now sleeps the sleep of death, waiting “the resurrection of the just.”

A similar impression was produced upon my youthful mind by *one* whose name is associated with all that is active in benevolence, or saintly in piety;\* and there was *another*, the friend of

\* The late Mrs. Isabella Graham.

her heart, with whom she often "took sweet counsel," who shunned the eye and the applause of men during life, and whose name, therefore, may not appear upon this humble page, but on whom the writer never looked without being reminded of "*Him who was meek and lowly in heart.*" It is said, that the strength of earthly affection, and the habit of sweet and familiar intercourse, will sometimes cause a change gradually to pass over the features, and assimilate in countenance, those who are assimilated in taste and character. Certainly the love and the practice of piety, the daily exercise of benevolent feelings and Christian affections, does add a peculiar grace and benignity to the aspect. It was so with *her*. She was lovely even amid the wanings of age. A heavenly expression played over her placid yet speaking features, and her look at times was truly angelic; while her soft and musical voice, with its silvery tones, seemed already attuned to accompany the golden harps of heaven, in "the song of the redeemed." Years have elapsed since she "departed to be with Christ," but her countenance, with its radiant expression, is distinctly before me, and my ear seems to drink in again the mellow sounds it loved to hear.

These were saints indeed. Their "witness was on high, their record was above." They were not of our external communion, but "*truly their fellowship was with the Father and his*

*Son Jesus Christ,"* and deeply had they "drank of his Spirit." "They rest from their labours, and their works do follow them."

Within the circle of ministerial experience, similar examples have been noted. They have formed the joy of my heart—the encouragement and reward of my labours. While here, they were "not far from the kingdom of God." To that kingdom they have been translated. They that were "ministered unto," have gone before him that "ministered." O that at humble distance, and to an humbler seat, he "may" be accounted worthy to follow them." But I may not dwell. Perchance at a future day, the leaf that contains their portraiture may be cut from a pastor's sketch book, and given to the public view.

Thus far, I have only adverted to the ordinary ripening for eternity, under no peculiar circumstances. It is worthy of note, that even this becomes most apparent when eternity draws near. It would seem as though there must be some innate persuasion, or secret warning of approaching translation; as though the voice must have been addressed to the believer, "Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die and not live:" as though like the apostle, "he knew that he must shortly put off this tabernacle, even as the Lord Jesus Christ had shown him." Such at least would be a natural inference from his hea-

venly-mindedness and increasing spirituality. As the attraction of gravitation causes the bodies on which it acts to move with a uniformly accelerated velocity, even so does the attraction which draws him up to heavenly things increase its power and the speed of his progress, as he draws nearer to the end of his course. "His light shines" most brightly "before men," just before it is extinguished in the darkness of death.

Let it be remembered, however, that this peaceful, holy, brightening close, is the heritage of those only who have lived near unto God, who have "been sober and watched unto prayer." A secret warning of their approaching departure, is rarely vouchsafed; and in the very cases where we might suspect it to have been given, from the careful redemption of time, and guardianship of the soul, we should find on inquiry, no consciousness or confession of its reception. Even to believers, "the Son of man may come in an hour that they think not of." For *their* admonition was recorded the expressive hint, "but if that *servant* shall begin to say within himself, my Lord delayeth his coming." To *them*, as "to *all*," their Master says, "*Watch*." If grace is magnified in the frequent instances of progressive and steady brightening for heaven which occur, confidence is precluded, and proper solicitude kept alive by the many cases of abrupt removal, "in the twinkling of an eye," without a moment's time

for "the trimming of the lamp," the "girding of the loins," the laying hold upon the staff of God, before the entrance into "the dark valley of the shadow of death."

In addition to the ordinary and sanctifying influences of his Spirit, it has pleased God to make the course of nature, and the ordinary allotments of his providence, tributary to this ripening of the Christian for his celestial state. The *wanings of age*, or the *wanings of disease*, are the common preparatives *for death*; he makes them also, in many cases, the efficient preparatives for the blessedness of heaven.

With *age* we naturally and properly associate ripeness of judgment, and richness of experience. A "right *Christian* judgment in all things," and an enlarged spiritual experience, are properly ascribed to the old age of the Christian, and to these his age itself has been made subservient. During its waning and yet venerated season, we find a beautiful illustration of the apostle's declaration—"Though our *outward* man perishes, yet the *inward* man is renewed day by day." Our allusion, now, is only to those in whom mind is not become a wreck, and whose age is the age of piety. It may truly be said that the outward man perishes, yea, dies daily. Without any powerful shocks of disease, you still perceive that the pulse of life beats with diminished force, and that the *springs*, and all the component parts of the animal

machinery, have lost their elasticity, and must soon, from the mere wear and tear of life, cease to perform their appropriate functions. While strength and beauty have departed from the body, the mind has in some degree shared the common decay, and sympathized with its material companion. The progressive decay continues; for there is no counteracting principle to arrest its course. The limits assigned by the Creator having been reached, nature bears witness, and conclusive witness too, that she cannot change or pass them. The stamina of life fail; and the weary pilgrim of earth, at last lays aside his staff, and enters his last earthly home. He "is gathered to his fathers;" gathered to "the garner" of his God, even as "a shock of corn when it is fully ripe." Yet amidst the lingering decays of nature, how many are the cases in which "the *inward* man is becoming renewed *day by day*." While age has impaired every bodily energy, deadened the finer sensibilities, and partially blunted the acuteness of intellect, and, in fact, frozen up the fountains which once made quick and sparkling the flow of thought and feeling, yet how often do we find, amidst all this dulness and torpor, that the flame of piety burns with increasing brilliancy, and sheds through the soul its most reviving warmth. "The wisdom that is from above," the wisdom that is "unto salvation," seems to increase, while there is displayed less and less of "the wis-

dom of this world." Believers still in the bloom of youth, or the strength of manhood, are content to "sit at the feet" of these "fathers in Israel;" and to learn lessons of spiritual experience, and of ardent piety, from lips that tremble as they move. As the evening of the natural day at once enriches and mellows the colouring of the clouds of heaven, so does the serene and tranquil evening of a life of piety give richness, beauty, and mellowness to all that is interesting in Christian attainment, or valuable in Christian character. It is the will of Him "who doeth all things well," that the sun which must set to the world, shall set in brightness and in glory. God "reveals himself" to his *aged* servants, "as he doth not to the world" of those who are still in their freshness of their prime. He gives tokens for good to those who need the assurances of his love; and when the earth becomes niggardly of its blessings to them because they can serve it no longer, heaven in mercy gives them a foretaste of its joys, as they are hastening to its portals. The venerable Jacob was "stricken in years," and the sight of his eyes had partially failed him, yet "he guided his hands wittingly," when he laid them upon the sons of Joseph, preferring the younger to the first-born: and when he was stretched upon the bed of death, and called around him his sons, it was evident that age had not extinguished in him the fire of spiritual intelligence; but that the light,

prophecy shed its brightest beams upon the darksome hour of death. St. John had long since passed the ordinary limit of man's earthly sojourn, when the love of his saintly spirit breathed forth in his truly Christian epistles; and he was pressed beneath a still heavier weight of years and of infirmity, when he rose superior to it all, that he might behold and record those sublime and unearthly visions which were to "seal up for ever the vision and the prophecy," and which carry forward our views to a point when "time shall be no more." Nor can we be wholly surprised at the wider range of spiritual comprehension, or the increasing spirituality of feeling, by which the age of piety is marked and brightened. It is far from unnatural that a larger measure of "the spirit of glory and of God" should rest upon those who have well nigh done with the earth; of whom it may truly be said, that "the world is crucified unto them, and they unto the world." Causes are made to operate in their case, which can scarcely fail to be effective. The diminution of animal feeling and animal passion—relaxation from earthly toil, and partial freedom from engrossing care\*—comparative deadness to "things

\* How simply and how touchingly is this expressed by the aged Barzillai—"How long have I to live, that I should go up with the king unto Jerusalem? I am this day fourscore years old: and can I discern between good and evil? can thy servant taste what I eat or what I drink? can I hear



temporal," because they are temporal, and nearer interest in "things eternal," because *they are eternal* and near at hand—leisure for reflection, in connexion with *the contemplative disposition* of age—the consciousness that energy is daily waning—that life is near its lowest ebb—a feeling of loneliness and desolation, because of outlived comforts and outlived friends—a feeling of attraction towards, and alliance with, the departed dead, rather than the living who remain—all these, influencing a heart already imbued with the love and the grace of God, already weary of earth, and longing for heaven, anxious to take, as it were "the wings of a dove, and flee away and be at rest," "to depart and be with Christ," must increase the spirituality of the aged disciple, and fit him for his final home. Wisely, mercifully has it been ordained by "Him who knoweth our frame," that we should thus slowly perish, in order that we may also be renewed day by day. Gracious is the provision, that the circle of enjoyment should be contracted, and the edge of enjoyment dulled; that the earth-cleaving spirit should be weaned from its fond attachment here, and have its love transferred to the heavens, where are its treasures and its rest. Well is it, that "the

any more the voice of singing-men and singing-women:  
Let thy servant, I pray thee, turn back again, that I may  
die in mine own city, and be buried by the grave of my  
father and of my mother." 2 Sam. xix. 34, 35, 37.

keepers of the house do tremble, and the strong men bow themselves—that the daughters of music are brought low—that there are fears in the way—that the almond tree doth flourish—that the grasshopper is a burden—and that desire fails”—before “the *silver cord is loosed*”—for these things cause it to be *gently* loosed; and mitigate the pain and the shock, “when the golden bowl is broken, and the pitcher broken at the fountain.” While they prepare the body for a more easy severance from its immortal inmate, they prepare that inmate, the heaven destined spirit, for its change to glory. Infirmities become monitors—failing energies speak loudly of coming death—death in prospect reminds of eternity, and eternity kept steadily in view, lifts up the soul to Him who “liveth for ever and ever,” and who “hath the keys of death and hell.” O how loudly does it speak of the mercy of our God, that the decay which comes to us in the very course of nature, which is the natural ripener of the mortal body for the sickle of death, should also so spiritualize the soul and mature its graces, as to make it meet to be *gathered unto God!*

But let it not be forgotten, that while *the age of piety* matures for blessedness, *unsanctified age* confirms in guilt, hardens in impenitence, seals over to perdition, and “treasures up wrath against the day of wrath.”

But all may not live to be old. The “three

score years and ten," are seldom reached. The "fourscore years," are for a few only, "by reason of strength;" God therefore has other preparatives for death, and brighteners for eternity. *Adversity* is a stern but a thorough teacher. Not in vain do his people pass through "the furnace of affliction." Prayer becomes more fervent and more importunate, the sense of dependance more immediate, and faith more lively, when "the soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." A suffering life prepared the righteous spirit of Immanuel for the anguish of Gethsemane's garden—and Gethsemane nerved him for Calvary—and on the *Cross*, "made perfect through suffering," he was prepared for his crown, as the King of saints, the "Head over all things to his Church." In some of its modifications, this brightening affliction may be allotted to those in the freshness of youth, and the fulness of health; and in their case we must feel with the prophet, that "*it is good for a man to bear the yoke in his youth.*" But there is *one kind* of affliction to which I would more especially allude. There is one *season of sorrow*, and yet *of profit*, which seems wisely ordained of God, to hold as it were an intermediate station between the two worlds, having an influence upon both, fitly closing the shifting exciting scenery of the one, and as fitly introducing the more peaceful, the more glorious scenery of the other—the *season of wasting, lingering sickness; and*

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in this season of sickness, when it is most true that the outward man is perishing, it is equally true that as to "the inward man," the sincere believer, is "renewed *day by day*." If his mental faculties be not seriously impaired, it will generally be found, that he makes better spiritual progress amidst the sufferings of the body, than in the fulness of exuberant health. There is something in his very situation, which is favourable to religious meditation, and to sacred exercises. The world is necessarily shut out, to a certain degree at least, from his thoughts. He cannot see its vanities, he cannot mingle in its pursuits—he is compelled to say, as he looks back upon the checquered scenes through which he has passed, "*All*, all is vanity and vexation of spirit." Self-communion, and communion with his God, both are forced upon him. The stillness and silence of his chamber, naturally and insensibly remind him of the stillness and silence of that last narrow house, to which perhaps he is near. He sees the tear of affectionate solicitude trembling in many an eye, "*unused*," perhaps, "*to weep*"—he knows every effort of earthly skill to be put forth in his behalf; and yet he knows, nay, more, he *feels*, that the tears, the anxieties, and the efforts of earth, can avail little or nought against the will of Him who ruleth supreme; and who, by the external indications of his providence, and perhaps by his secret mo-

nitions, has said to him, "*Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die, and not live.*" To God then he turns; not as to a new resource, in the way of a new experiment, but as to a *tried friend*, whose faithfulness adversity brings into requisition and puts to the test, and who is now appealed to with new earnestness and devotedness of spirit. If his malady be slow and insidious in its character, then is it so much the more spiritualizing in its effect, because making "patience to have its perfect work." When the first attacks are levelled against the citadel of life, the soul anxiously asks of itself the question, "Whereunto shall these things grow?" and fears the answer which it still anticipates. The attack continues. Yet a little and the outworks are taken; while the relentless conqueror continues his career, which the vital energies strive feebly, fruitlessly to check. The limbs, once so active, almost refuse their office. The eye either loses its lustre, or shines with a deceptive and unnatural brilliancy. The cheek assumes the anticipated hollowness and paleness of death; or glows with that hectic flush, which is but another token of his approach. The voice that lately sent forth its full and mellifluous tones, now has a hollow and sepulchral sound. Yet a little, and the victim may not even pass the threshold of his own dwelling, to taste the air in its freshness, and to look upon the sun in *his radiance*. The exhausted frame may not leave

its couch; and yet, alas! it is not the couch of rest. In suffering and restlessness the day moves heavily along, while a double gloom and a double weariness rest over the slow paced hours of night. At length the conqueror triumphs—the last sigh is heard—and the emaciated form is quiet in death! This is the first and the dark side of the picture. Here you behold “the outward man perishing;” perishing by a slow and painful process. But as the body draws nearer and nearer to the grave, the soul is sublimating for heaven. It seems as though the vail were partially at least withdrawn, and as though, like the enraptured Stephen, it could “see the heavens opened, and Jesus standing at the right hand of the Majesty on high.” The eye of faith seems now to have a more piercing ken, and to give indubitable evidence of things not seen.” At length the preparatory discipline is complete. There is a voice from heaven—“Come, for all things are now ready.” “It is finished!” The earth-weaned spirit is released from its suffering, and “returns to Him who gave it;” the closing lips having first uttered one strain of thanksgiving, and the expressive features having exhibited one beaming of joy, which still lingers and dwells upon them, even when the marble coldness and whiteness of death is there. Such is the practical commentary which the providence of God gives to the declaration of his word, that “though the outward

man perish, the inward man is renewed *day by day*."

Let it not be supposed that this is an extravagant description, for it is given from nature. It is predicated on personal observation. "We speak that we do know, we testify that we have seen." Were I to draw an inference from the recollections of my life, and especially my ministerial life, I would scarcely hesitate to hazard the assertion, that where *sanctified affliction* has instrumentally saved "its thousands," *sanctified sickness* saves "its tens of thousands." The effect of *sorrow* is apt to wane away with its decreasing poignancy; but as "the sickness that is unto death," goes steadily increasing unto death, its effect, when salutary, must be salutary to the end, without the possibility of dimunition or re-action. The unction which it gives to the believer, like Mary's anointing of her Lord, is "unto his burial." It is "the savour of life unto life."

It is familiar, even to worldly observers, that serious reflection, and a personal attention to the concerns of religion, sometimes *originate* in the visitation of disease; nor can any servant of the sanctuary be ignorant that it is one of the means employed for the conversion of the *sinful*. If, then, in some cases it can awe *them* into reflection, melt *them* to repentance, and move *them* to faith, it must surely be supposed capable of *brightening* the graces, and increasing the spiri-

tuality of those who are already in a Christian state. The liveliest impressions which the writer has ever had of the state of the redeemed above, when they "shall be made equal to the angels," have arisen from the close observation of some whom "pining sickness" was conducting to their God. They are impressions never to be erased. He has been privileged again and again to enter

"The chamber where the good man breathed his last,"

and he has there seen how the chastening of the body could be for the health and life of the immortal soul. Two things have been specially observed; that the more of faith and holiness there was in exercise when disease commenced, the more was it robbed of its anguish, and death despoiled of its sting; and again, that the more sharp and more protracted the visitation, the more complete became the spirituality of the saint.

There was young J. T. the widow's son, of —, the staff of her earthly hope, the expected prop of her house. She had been liberal of her slender resources, to give him, as it is termed, *a start in the world*—a first impetus on the great high way of exertion, towards the goal of success; but there was partial disappointment *there*, and the sun of prosperity shone not as brightly as had been hoped on his early toil in the fresh morning of his day; still, that was nothing; he had health



and character, and industry, and filial piety, and with *these* he must succeed. But ah! the spoiler came! and health withered at his approach, and the nerve of exertion was unstrung, and languor seized upon him who had never wearied of effort before; and, shattered in body, dispirited in mind, and broken in fortune, he returned to his widowed mother's house; returned, to languish and to die. But it was the home of comfort, of affection, and of piety; just such a home as the sick man needs for a wasting body, and a wounded or trembling spirit. There were warm and kindly beating hearts, and kindred sympathies, and delicate attentions to greet him at his coming—"nursing mothers" to smooth his pillow and prepare his aliment, and sisterly attendants to minister to his wants, and physicians for the body, and spiritual physicians for the soul, skilled in "ministering to the mind diseased." And he needed them all; for disease came upon him in its strength, and death approached in his terrors. But happily hope and faith came also, to sustain him when "heart and flesh should fail," to point him to the skies. Whether, or how far, the developements of piety had anticipated the early indications of decay, I am not informed, but suffering called into action whatever latent piety might have resulted from pious training, a blessing on fervent prayers, or from the special and newly given grace of the Most High. Marked and rapid was his

spiritual proficiency, and thorough his final ripeness in the faith, passing, as he did under the dark cloud of sorrow, and "baptized unto God in a sea of affliction." O! the many days I have seen him wrestling manfully with pain, or fainting through exhaustion, or consuming by the burning hectic, which, like a conqueror flushed with triumph, sat proudly on either cheek, and still without a murmur, going, like a more meek and noble sufferer, as it were "a lamb to the slaughter" of death, and "as a sheep that before her shearers is dumb, opening not his mouth." And O! the many, many nights of sleeplessness and misery, in which he would be full of "tossings to and fro," until the morning! How often, as I have watched beside his bed, have I seen the clasped hands, and the upraised eyes, giving note of the prayer of faith that was secretly spreading his misery before the eye of compassion; and how sweet was it when all was still around, save the ticking of the watch over the mantle that told the passing minutes, to hear him speak of the mercies of God that encompassed that bed of suffering—of the dying love of Christ to sinners—of "the light and immortality" brought to life by the Gospel. O! these were precious scenes—precious hours! "Look," said he to me during one of these nights of suffering, "look at that lamp—it is quivering and flickering in the socket—it is almost gone! What an emblem of myself; even so is my poor

flame of life flickering in its socket, and playing fitfully around its little cell, soon to be extinguished in the darkness of death! but it matters not—it will be rekindled, and burn brighter in a better world. I know in whom I have believed: Jesus is the light of life.” And there it doubtless has been rekindled, for it is seen no more on earth.

——A few weeks after, I was summoned from the place where my autumnal vacations were usually spent, to follow this young and suffering believer to his early grave; and over that grave tears were shed, whose fountain was deep indeed.

The shepherd cannot readily forget those “lambs” of his flock who have been specially cast upon his pastoral care; and never will I forget the gentle, the lovely, the suffering H. M——, of B——. Surely in *her*, “patience had its perfect work;” and as nearly as fallen humanity permitted, she was “made perfect through suffering.” O! how painfully trying, yet how thoroughly refining, was the process through which *she* was made to pass! What rich and delightful spiritual experiences resulted from her last year of suffering! She might well have said of the *school of affliction*, and of the Scripture as studied in that school, in the language of the Psalmist—through it “I have more understanding than all my teachers; yea, I understand more than the ancients.” Years of ordinary, semi-worldly and prosperous *profession*, could not have given her such insight

into sacred things, into "the deep things of God," and such experience of divine consolations, as came to her through that last visitation, which enabled her, "in a short time, to do the work of many days." Her fears were many, her conflicts sore, her prayers importunate, her longings for assurance great; and *such* assurance as the anxious spirit needs—the assurance of exalted Christian hope—came to her at last; not as she had once delusively expected, in the way of special miracle, private revelation, but through ordinary Gospel promise, received in faith, and sealed to her by "the Spirit of promise." Well said the poet of the Christian's dying hour,

"Then, then, the triumph and the trance begin,  
And all the phoenix spirit burns within."

And well might this language, so full of poetry, and yet so full of truth, have been applied in her case. Her victory was as complete as her trial had been severe. A day is short, but a day of dying agony is long indeed. Slowly did it pass with her, sadly with those who could have "died for her," that she might live. Through much of that long and weary day was her transparent, bloodless hand, placed in mine, while the opened book of God supplied me with words of cheering promise—with themes of Christian comfort, meet for the dying ear and the fainting heart; and strong was the appropriating faith which received

them to herself—and simple, touching, pertinent, saintly, were her dying comments. “The bridegroom cometh,” said she sweetly, looking too pure for earth, and meet only for the bridal of heaven—“I go to meet him at his coming. Thanks to his efficient grace, I am ready, waiting, watching—my lamp is burning—come Lord Jesus, come quickly. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God, who giveth me the victory, through my Lord Jesus Christ.” And “the victory” was hers. She had “fought a good fight, she had finished her course”—her crown was won. The strain of holy triumph was hushed in the stillness of death. There was another added to the ransomed host, “who came out of great tribulation!”

This, reader, is not from my book of parish sketches. Its only record was on the tablets of memory, “the fleshly table of the heart.” And now memory carries me farther back, to a scene in which my heart has a closer and a holier interest.

My earliest remembrance of languishment and death was connected with a touching example of “suffering affliction,” sanctified to high spirituality. The sufferer was young. Nineteen summers marked her little all of life—and the charm of young attachment to this fair world must have *been* heightened by the bright promise of happi-

ness in coming years—by the fond hope that is connected with the pledged heart and the affianced hand. Yet, with all this to bind her to life, she was resigned to death—willing “to depart and be with Jesus.” The commencement of her malady was doubtless insidious and unobserved. There comes to me a confused remembrance of her drooping form, and blanching cheek—of anxieties exhibited and expressed in the family circle—of various expedients to prevent ennui to the invalid, and to cheat disease of his prey, by frequent changing of the scene—by daily rides or excursions on the water, when the weather was favourable—but much more distinct is my remembrance of her increasing seriousness and love for sacred reading—of her Bible and Prayer Book, so often found open on her little stand—of her delight in accompanying a loved mother’s voice in singing the hymns of praise, and especially that one, evidently so appropriate—

“Hark! they whisper, angels say,  
Sister spirit, come away.”

All this was observed; but I knew not then that the patient sufferer was gathering together her spiritual resources for the last dread encounter; and, no doubt, there were many other evidences of waning interest in the things of earth, and increasing interest in things beyond the earth, which my childish heedlessness noted not. At

ing upon her loved name, hastened from the house to enter it no more! It was *her betrothed*! He had loved her, doated on her in life, and it seemed as though he was desirous to follow her in death. Life, to him, had lost its charm; and he was wildly, perilously, sinfully reckless of its preservation. Seeking relief in change, and hastening, he knew not, cared not whither, he embarked in an old and shattered vessel, that should never more have braved the faithless sea. When, or how he perished, none returned to tell. The vessel was never heard of more. *He* sleeps in ocean's depths—*she* in her quiet church-yard grave.—But “the earth and the sea shall give up *their* dead.” *Reader, she was my sister! Sanctified sickness* loosened the cords of earth, and made her free for the light and life of a better world. Disease and death were made to minister unto her, so that she might be “an heir of salvation.” Blessed are they, who, even by means like these, are brought to thorough spirituality on earth, before they go to join “the spirits of the just made perfect.”

That sister rests not alone. The mourners and the mourned repose together. He who bowed his aged head upon his staff, as he wept for her early removal, has pillowed that head in the grave. The brother, for whose coming she so anxiously watched in her dying hour—“his sun,” like hers, “having gone down while it was yet

day"—sleeps beside her. *There*, too, is one, who, without a mother's name, loved her with almost maternal tenderness, and bewailed her with almost maternal grief, and who was ever as a mother to all my mother's children. And *there*, last of all, is that mother herself—"gone to" those who might not "return to her"—gone to "*her Father and their Father, to her God and their God*;" and soon we shall *all* be there; and they who once formed a family of the earth, shall be numbered among the countless families of the dead. O that it may be, to realise that noble imagining of the painter's mind, "the resurrection of a pious family in the last day."

The heart loves to think and to speak of those whom it has loved, yet lost: and if "Christ have been magnified in them, whether by their life or their death," the Christian heart prompts to speak the more freely. There is indeed "a bitterness of its own," which the heart alone can know—there is a grief with which a stranger "~~inter-~~meddle"~~"~~ not." Be these kept sacred from the public eye. There are remembrances, my reader, touching and holy remembrances, which I may not share with you. There are others, illustrative of the providence and of the grace of God, and of the Christian's disciplined maturing for heaven, which need not be withheld.

I have spoken to you of my mother. My thoughts recur to her again, and my pen must



follow them. Hard, hard indeed was her discipline of sorrow, and sickness, and infirmity; but blessed and brightening was its effect. Naturally timid and retiring—early widowed, and deeply tried—she bowed her head to the blast, and seemed like a drooping flower, too sensitive and fragile to endure the rough winds of this unkindly world. Yet she did endure. He who “tempers the wind to the shorn lamb,” sustained her. She was permitted to lean upon the arm, and to share the heart and the converse of one, who, a sister by blood, was more than a sister in feeling and in act. At length this stay of her trembling heart, to whom she had so long and so closely clung, that her very life seemed bound up with her—was suddenly removed—“full of years and full of honour”—yea, full of faith, and strong in hope—herself, a bright example of growing spirituality in waning years—of native liberality and disinterestedness but rarely paralleled, changed and sanctified into truly Gospel benevolence—of early and absorbing worldliness, finally displaced by “the love of the Father”—of a Martha-spirit, ever “cumbered with much serving,” delighting subsequently rather to “sit at the feet of Jesus,” and rejoicing in “the good part never to be taken from her”—and, at last, “of becoming a conqueror, and more than a conqueror,” in the last sharp conflict with “the king of terrors.” But she was removed; and she that clung to her so fondly was

left to her desolation. We felt that she would not survive it. Hearts that have grown as it were together, may not long be dissevered even by death itself. A union that has formed the habit of life, can only be broken at the expense of life. The affinities of spirit are strong indeed. The distance between two worlds is not too great for their attractive force. If they cannot bring back *the dead to the living*, they at least hasten *the living to the dead*. Her heart was smitten to the dust. She rallied not again. The blow was struck, from which there could be no recovery. For a time, indeed, she endured life, but she enjoyed it no more. Her thoughts, her heart, were with the departed. She longed to be with them. Yet her process of decay was slow. Days of languor, and "nights of weariness were appointed unto her." For seventeen weary months she lingered upon the earth, and they were months of spiritual improvement. Patience was exercised—submission was perfected—faith strengthened—hope gathered brightness—experience was ripened. Her "profit was evident unto all." It was delightful indeed to the eye of Christian affection. O! those blessed seasons of converse with her on "the things of God"—on death with its bitterness, grace with its supports, and eternity with its expected developments! And that last sacramental communing!—when a son, "the only son of his mother,

and she a widow," was constrained to deliver to the dying mother, the emblems of redeeming love—and when the children, as they communed with her, "moistened the bread" of life, and "mingled the wine" of joy with their tears—tears of natural sorrow, to think that it was for the last time, and yet of pious gratitude, that this last opportunity was theirs; while she, calm and self-possessed, was evidently rejoicing in the thought, that her next communing would be *above*, where she would "taste the fruit of the vine," "new in her Father's kingdom." Throughout the whole of that touching yet consolatory service, her voice was heard, clear though tremulous in response; and when it was proposed to omit the Communion hymn, because, in that hour of deep excitement—with hearts oppressed with grief, and voices choaked with emotion—it was felt to be scarcely practicable to "sing one of the songs of Zion"—she plead for the effort, and sweetly assisted in the performance. O it was indeed a season to be remembered! It seemed to be done, as it were, "unto her burial;" and the affecting celebration derived additional interest from the presence and participation of *another mother*, over whom the snows of ninety winters had passed, and who, with her age-dimmed eyes fixed on heaven, still lingers with us on the earth!

And then that dying testimony, so full, so *precious!* when, after a night of restlessness and

agony—her last on earth—she said, “I have had an awful night; that is, as to *my body*, but not as to *my mind*—all is right there; *there* I have peace: God has done all things well—I know in whom I have believed, and am at rest.” And then, that last whispered word, audible only to the ear that was bent low to the dying couch to hear—“My Saviour,” faintly breathed amid the faintness of death—this, O, this was enough! It was a legacy of enduring comfort to those who were constrained to mourn, but who now “mourn not as others, without hope.”

Blessed be thy name, thou Father of mercies and God of all consolation, that even by age and disease thou dost prepare for death and judgment, and dost “nourish up unto everlasting life.”

*Sickness* and *age*, however, are *special* preparatives, not appointed unto all, and therefore not to be usually relied on for the soul's meetness for standing before its Judge. Many a head is laid low in the grave, that has not been whitened by age, and many go down “to the chambers of death,” without passing through the gloom of the sick chamber. Let not the renewed and heaven-seeking spirit wait for these, then, to give it the last finish for eternity. Rather, in the daily exercises of devotion, in daily and filial intercourse with heaven, let it seek increasing spirituality, and thus secure its safety and augment its joy. It is a mercy that God makes the life-sapping infir-

mities of mortal man conducive to his soul's well-being in eternity ; but this salutary discipline may never be extended to us ; and even though it should, yet the improvement hence derived would be partially robbed of its proper influence on others, by the very circumstances under which it would be exhibited ; for, to careless and worldly observers, the service of debility and age will ever seem questionable, being regarded as the sacrifice of fear on the altar of superstition, or the offering of dotard weakness consequent on natural decay ; or, as *an enforced conformity to the proprieties of time and circumstances* : but, SPIRITUALITY in the freshness of youth, or the pride of maturity—in the fulness of health, or the brightness of prosperity—SPIRITUALITY not obtained by avoiding the evil, but by overcoming the evil that is in the world—SPIRITUALITY, not in the desert or the cloister, but in the midst of the world, surrounded by its temptations, exposed to its trials, annoyed by its vexations, and harassed by its cares—this is above suspicion, and beyond dispute. It shows Christian principle in its own single influence, independently of adventitious causes—Christian conduct in its proper disinterestedness—Christian holiness in all its beauty and moral dignity. This is the noblest exhibition that can be given of a changed heart—the best preparative against the contingencies of the future—the surest pledge of “ acceptance in the Beloved.”

Be this, my Christian readers, your constant aim. Rest not until "YE ARE WASHED, UNTIL YE ARE JUSTIFIED, UNTIL YE ARE SANCTIFIED, IN THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS, AND BY THE SPIRIT OF OUR GOD." Be not satisfied even with humble, though sure indications of incipient preparedness for heaven; but seek to "go from strength to strength," and to be indeed "changed from glory to glory."

There is a noble incitement to the cultivation and exercise of this spirituality in the thought, that all of it which is attained, is so much gained for eternity—so much of "treasure laid up for us in heaven." There are sciences which have reference only to the earth; and which, however necessary for *it*, can have no scope for their exercise in the heavenly world, and which consequently are valueless as far as eternity is concerned, except through their general and indirect influence in the enlargement and strengthening of intellect. But not so with this. Essential in its lower degrees, to admission into heaven, its higher degrees are connected with proportionate degrees of blessedness and glory. Happiest is he who has most of it! for he has most of the spirit of heaven. He enters upon his glorified state under the happiest auspices—with the fullest preparation for its exalted duties and its rich enjoyments—most assimilated to its pure and spiritual intelligences. He will shine most brightly in that

firmament, in which "one star shall differ from another star in glory." His seat will be "high and lifted up," near to those favoured ones who immediately surround "the throne of God and of the Lamb." Be increasing spirituality, then, the aim of all who are living and labouring for heaven. It is that grace which shall not be utterly lost, even in glory. "Whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away;" but this, like "charity, never faileth." It is *the essential characteristic grace of heaven*—it is *as enduring as eternity*.

Is it measurably and even conspicuously attained? Then be it carefully and jealously preserved. It must be kept bright and polished by daily use, or it will lose its lustre, and the rust will gather upon it. So volatile and ethereal is its nature, that it may not with impunity be exposed to the atmosphere of earth. In that atmosphere, its essence speedily, insensibly evaporates; and when its spirit, its aroma has fled, although its form may remain, its power is lost: and profession without that power, is as "the salt that has lost its savour."

Let believers then look well to themselves, to their spirit within, and their profession without, that they "lose not those things which they have wrought, but receive a full reward." It is well, indeed, that they have a better keeper than

themselves—that they “are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation”—but let them remember, that this celestial guardianship will only be exercised over those who are watchful over themselves. There is weight in that solemn injunction of Scripture; and, O that it might come forcibly to every mind—“Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life;” yes, “out of *it* indeed are the issues of life;” and if its fountain be not kept pure and uninjured, those issues cease, and life is at an end. The fabled garden of the Hesperides, with its golden fruits, and guarded by its hundred-headed dragon, but faintly illustrates the value and the danger of the Christian soul, which should indeed be “as a watered garden,” bearing the more than golden fruits of piety, and requiring for its security, a sleepless vigilance and an active warfare, such as were fabulously indicated by the hundred eyes and hundred hands of Briareus. Keepers, then, as we are of a spiritual vineyard, thus rich and yet endangered, let us “be sober, and watch unto prayer;” prayer unto that “Keeper of Israel, who will neither slumber nor sleep.”

And now, my readers, we part; for a time at least, perhaps for ever! and as my pen fondly lingers on the last verge of my subject, I feel a deeper anxiety, and a warmer desire that it should trace, were it possible, a parting word that might be for your good. It is easy for us to become



the dupes of fancy; but I knew not until now, that her illusions could affect the feelings as strongly as reality itself. The intercourse of the pen has insensibly beguiled me into an intercourse of the heart and the affections. I find myself seduced into a fancied acquaintance and familiarity with many of you, whose "face in the flesh" I may never perhaps behold, and to whom, in human probability, I shall for ever be a stranger. I have addressed you, and communed with you in these pages, until I seem to know, and assuredly feel for you; and until I can truly say, that "my heart's desire and prayer to God for you is, that you may be saved." That this feeling will be reciprocal, I dare not hope; it will be enough if the proffered intercourse be not harshly declined; and should there be the reward of benefit to you, I will gladly forego the cheering reward of kindly feeling to myself. Whether this little volume shall be as "the bread cast upon the waters, to be found after many days," or whether it shall go down at once to oblivion, I cannot foresee. To the providence of God it is committed in faith, although not without solicitude. If there is good which it may accomplish, He can sanctify it to good. With Him be the issue!

Truly, yet humbly can I say, that its preparation has led me to look more closely into my own heart, and to lament its corruption more deeply; if it induce you to look into yours, its object will

be gained. Take with you from its perusal, these last and, solemnly repeated truths—That BY NATURE “THE HEART IS DECEITFUL ABOVE ALL THINGS AND DESPERATELY WICKED”—THAT GRACE MUST RENEW IT—THAT WATCHFULNESS MUST KEEP IT—AND THAT ITS SANCTIFICATION MUST BRIGHTEN UNTIL ITS ENTRANCE UPON GLORY. Touchingly indeed has a Christian poet expressed my closing monition—

“ But know! there dwells within that breast  
A spirit, an immortal guest!  
In beauty, more resplendent far  
Than damask rose, or evening star.  
Which, envious Death! survives the hour,  
When mortals own thy withering power.  
Haste then, improve that nobler part,  
Worth all thy care, worth all thy art.  
THAT MUST BE NOBLE, WHICH TO GOD 'S ALLIED,  
AND WORTH ALL CARE FOR WHICH A SAVIOUR DIED.”

THE END.





